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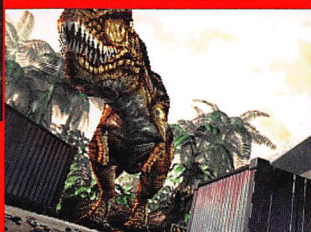
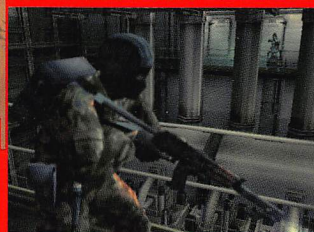
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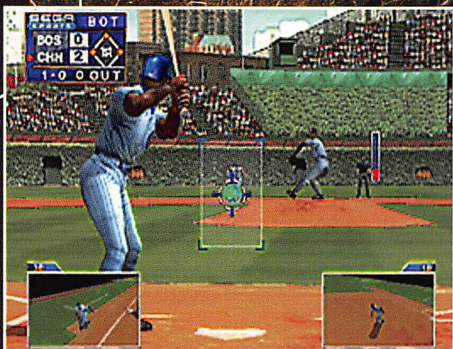
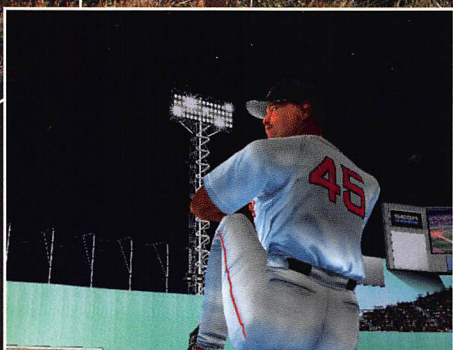
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AUGUST
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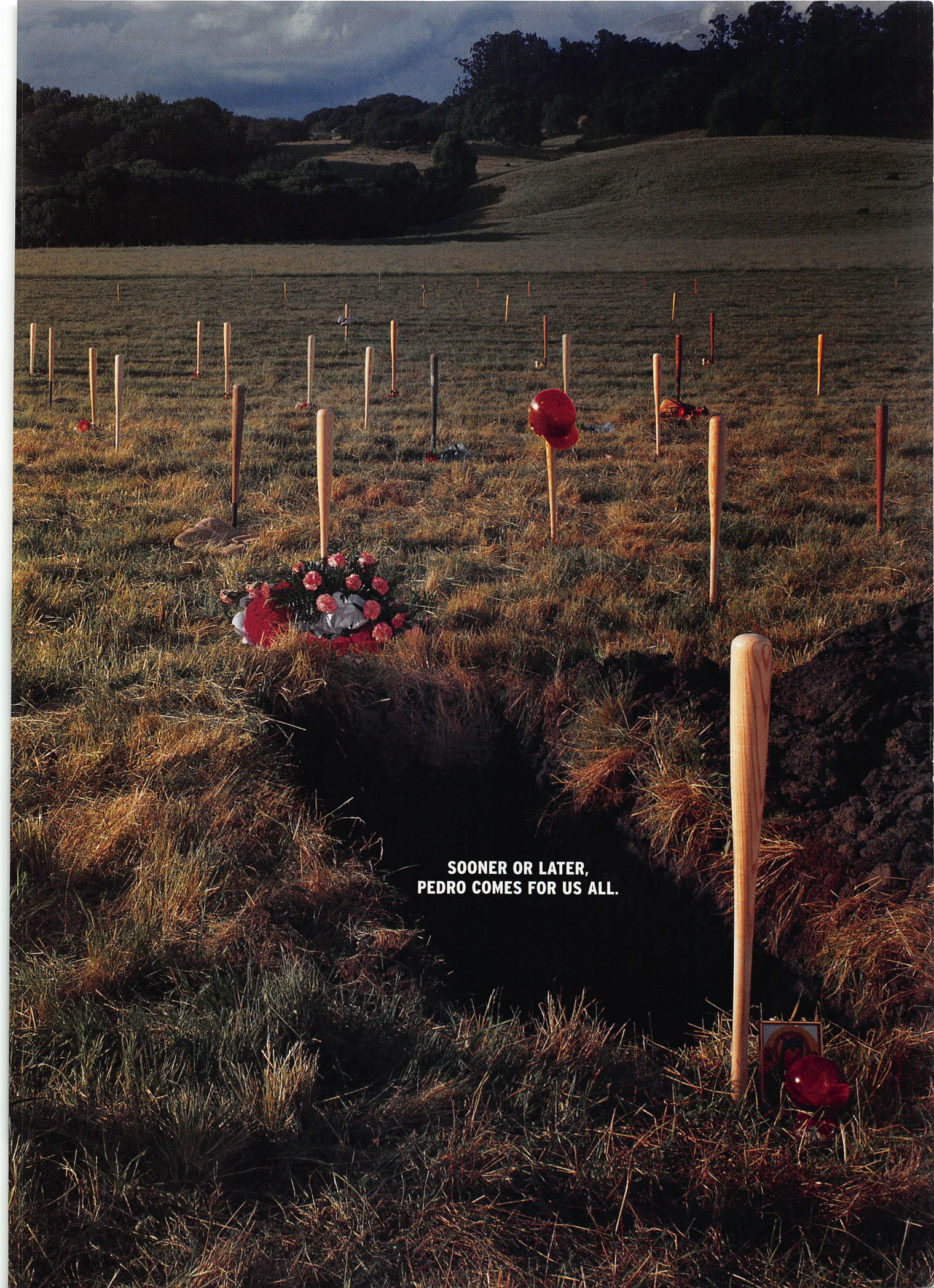
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IT'S THINKING

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**SOONER OR LATER,
PEDRO COMES FOR US ALL.**



Gamers' Republic MANIFESTO

Not much doing this month, unless you count the fact that the world has gone completely crazy! In the span of just a few months, our lives have been overrun by voyeurism and the game industry seems to be evolving in strange and disturbing ways. *Survivor* and *Big Brother* I can live with, but I'm still coming to terms with the latest developments in gaming. The first strange revelation was the ultimate non-acceptance of the Neo Pocket. As the Game Boy struck 100 million users worldwide, SNK's more powerful and attractive port-a-player did so poorly that they had to pull out of the market altogether. With games like *Capcom vs. SNK*, *Metal Slug* and *Metal Slug 2nd Mission* on the shelves, and *Magician Lord* on the way, it's hard to figure why the Pocket couldn't muster a better showing. Surely the impending release of the do-it-all-and-then-some Game Boy Advance had some bearing on SNK's decision to call it quits. Still, we hate to see any viable platform die.

It's hard to presume what mainstream American gamers want these days. For instance, the Dreamcast is on an unprecedented role in terms of both pricing and available software, yet quality games like *Super Magnetic Neo*—an ode to platformers past—continues to perform below expectations. Here's a 60-fps old-school platformer that's deep and presents an altogether cool new universe—and gamers stayed home. Do us all a favor and set your alarms for *Jet Grind*, *Shenmue*, and *Grandia 2*, would you please.

Over the next 18 months, gamers are going to be on the receiving end of the largest and most significant evolution the video game market has ever undergone as three powerful new combatants enter the fray—the PS2, Xbox, and Dolphin. I know we're ready, I just hope all of you are. In the meantime, I'll continue to enjoy *Metal Slug 3* until the 3D police trace my location.

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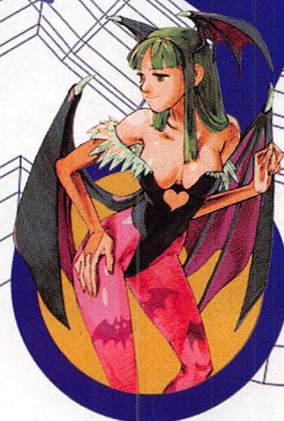
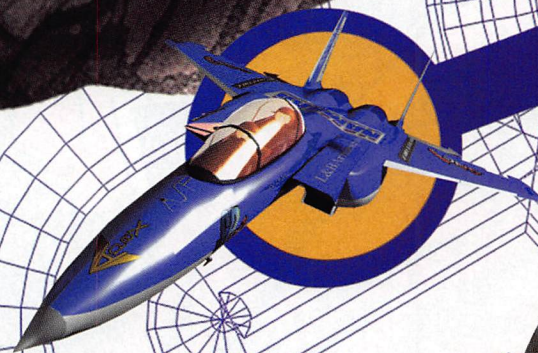
GR VOL. 3 ISSUE #3

TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
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Evil Twin

Cyprien's Chronicles



EVIL TWIN .18

Every once in a while a game comes along that shows us sights wonderful and entirely new. Inspired by such films as Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and novels by Charles Dickens, first-time developers In Utero are creating one of the more distinct and promising games we've seen in a long time. Find out what happens when a young orphan's nightmares become reality in *Evil Twin*...

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FUR FIGHTERS .50

They come bearing fur, scales, and one helluva good time. The best thing to hit the action-platform genre since Mario 64 has arrived for the Dreamcast, courtesy of Bizarre Creations. Join Roofus, Juliette, Bungalow, Chang, Rico, and Tweek on the adventure of a lifetime.

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MONTHLY GAMING NEWS

FRONTLINES

MAGIC TRICKS: AN INTERVIEW WITH BLEEM!

I drove past the place five times before I had the sense to ask the gas station guy where Bleem! was. Barely a skip from the intersection of Melrose and Vine in downtown L.A., seemingly invisible within the heavy Spanish district of small shops and endless barrios, was the last place you'd expect to find the most creative enterprise to attack the gaming industry.

There was a guard gate around the peculiar gray one-leveler, too small from the outside to house the army of anarchists and idealists I envisioned. But like all things in Cali, the fact that exterior image is terribly deceptive became clearer once I saw the sprawling warehouse and tightly sectioned tables of bleem! game tester after game tester.

Paul Chen, director of sales for Bleem!, flashed the same comfortable smile and inviting handshake he'd given at E3. We took our seats, and I took a minute to take in the scene. This wasn't some anarchist programming hole. This was an operation. And it was confidence. If these guys said they wanted to make consoles do magic tricks, you couldn't help but believe it. Their attitude told the story: bleem! was going to change the gaming industry. Forever.

Chen and vice president Will Kempe were breathing proof. Their carefree smiles and laid-back mien, throughout the entire conversation was, again, the deception. Bleem! is very much in control. Viva La bleem!

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: WHY BLEEM? WHY BLEEM FOR DREAMCAST?

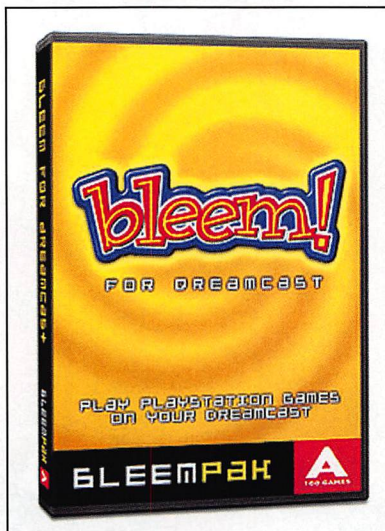
Chen: Bleem's technology is a very exciting technology. There's so many PlayStation games out there—I'd say anywhere from 3,000 to 4,000 games worldwide between PAL, Japanese, and U.S.—that it seems like a shame for all of that code to be lost when the next generation of games comes out. That's why the original programmer Randy Linden, and David Herpol-sheimer, the president of our company, kind of formed this venture to revive the software and bring it to a higher level on the PC. We wanted to take the games to a better playing experience through the use of high-level 3D graphics cards and bring the resolution up.

Dreamcast seemed like the natural progression because of the fact that it was the next-generation machine to the PlayStation. It had great graphics and processing power and it gave us an opportunity because the platform didn't have that many games available.

Being able to bring the potential of that many games to the Sega platform was a great challenge. We wanted to bring a better gaming experience to the Dreamcast platform.

GR: THERE WERE SOME CURIOUS COMMENTS IN THE BLEEM! PRESS RELEASE THAT COULD BE TAKEN AS AN OPEN ENDORSEMENT OF THE DREAMCAST. IS SEGA OF AMERICA INVOLVED? ARE THEY SUPPORTIVE?

Kempe: [Laughter] What did we say? It went



along the lines of: "There's no reason not to own a Dreamcast now. With top-selling PlayStation games selling for around \$20 and Sega's new "Free Dreamcast" program, you can walk out with a new Dreamcast, plus bleem! and four best-selling PlayStation games for less than the cost of a new PlayStation."

[Smiles] I don't think it meant anything other than that. The Dreamcast is a great machine. It's 149 bucks. The PS2 is \$299.99. I've looked at PlayStation 2. I haven't played that many games on it but it doesn't blow my socks off.

Chen: Our product will help Sega sell more Dreamcast platforms. It gives a potential DC owner a wider assortment of games. Plus, it brings titles that were never available on a different platform such as Final Fantasy or Gran Turismo—titles that were only available on PlayStation—now they'll be able to play those games on a better machine with better graphics with quality 3D effects, and open the Dreamcast up to so many possibilities.

GR: SEGA IN THE PAST HAS BEEN PUBLICALLY AGAINST EMULATORS. NOW THEY'RE CURIOUSLY SILENT. HAVE YOU HEARD ANY REASONS.

[They both laugh.]

Chen: I would imagine that they're probably fairly happy. They haven't come forward or said one way or another. At E3, a number of the guys who worked for the company were intrigued enough to come over and check it out, and seemed to be impressed. I heard Ken Kutaragi came over and checked it out, too [laughter]. He did! I was witness to that!

Kempe: I saw it, too. He came and he stood there for a little while. [To Chen] How long was he there?

Chen: He was there for...I'd say two minutes.

Kempe: And then he went over to the side, sat on the little bench, opened up his briefcase and started shuffling papers. I don't know whether

he was making notes or not, but he was sucking his face in... I was trying not to be too obvious. But yeah, he came over and checked it out.

GR: DID HE SAY ANYTHING?

Kempe: I didn't really know it was him until he was gone. I didn't really talk to him.

Chen: He just gave a blank stare and walked away. He didn't look pissed off. He didn't look happy, of course. He looked very neutral. He had a very blank look on his face.

Kempe: The Sony guys—when we were at COMDEX we tried to get into the elevator and the security guys stopped us, and we were wearing our green T-Shirts, and looked all like "what-ever" at him and he looked right through us, turned around, entered the elevator, and fixed his hair [laughter].

GR: DO YOU SEE SONY STOPPING YOU FROM MAKING YOUR PROJECTED RELEASE?

Kempe: No, not really. We're saying a release date of July 4. I don't know if we will be done with testing, but we're saying roughly, July. Sega tests games on an average of 128 hours per game, you know? Where does that leave us? That's one game. You look at the staff we have. We have to test the games in PAL and the other formats.

Chen: It's just a really long process.

GR: HAVE YOU RUN INTO ANY COMPLICATIONS SO FAR?

Kempe: Yeah, it's a lot of chipping away. It's a lot of work. A lot of work.

GR: IT'S BEEN RUMORED THAT BLEEM! WILL SUPPORT IMPORT GAMES...

Chen: Bleem! for Dreamcast?

GR: YES.

Chen: Bleem! for Dreamcast will support import games.

Kempe: Well, we're not sure if it does yet. We haven't even tested it. The Japanese stuff? We haven't even tested it yet.

Chen: If not the same version that we do have, we will have a second version that will support import games—that will support Japanese or PAL. So basically, it'll be one version or a second version. It depends on the programming that's done, but we haven't even gotten to that stage yet.

GR: HOW DOES THE BLEEM! TECHNOLOGY WORK WITHOUT HARDWARE MODIFICATION? DOES IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE WINDOWS OPERATING SYSTEM?

Kempe: That, we don't know. [Looks around the room to the tech area.] Hey Matt!

Matt: I don't know anything!

Kempe: Think hard before you answer this...

Matt: I don't know the question [laughter].

GR: HOW DOES THE BLEEM TECHNOLOGY WORK WITHOUT HARDWARE MODIFICATION? DOES IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE WINDOWS OPERATING SYSTEM?

Matt: No, we don't use Windows CE.

GR: REALLY?

Matt: We don't use Windows CE at all.

**GR: SO HOW DOES IT WORK?**

Matt: The best quote I could give is when Randy at E3 said it's magic. We really can't get into *how* it works, but basically we use a piece of plastic—a CD—that you put it in the Dreamcast. It loads into the memory, then you take it out and insert your PlayStation CD. I don't know what you would go into as far as how exactly it works but it loads into memory.

GR: AND IT'S NOT USING THE WINDOWS CE?

Chen: If we could take Windows out—totally—bleem! would run a lot better. Randy programs into the machine code. He's getting into the low, low, low nuts-and-bolts of the machine on that level. Not operating with the Windows system at all.

GR: ISN'T THE PLAYSTATION CODE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THAN THE DREAMCAST CODE?

Matt: Well, on the PC, you're writing in x-86 assembler. I believe in the Dreamcast, the main chip for the Dreamcast uses SH4 assembler. So, obviously a completely different code base, but any good programmer that knows two different languages can obviously swap between the two. It's the same function, they just work differently.

GR: WHAT IS THE POSSIBILITY OF BLEEM! FOR N64 TO DREAMCAST OR PC TO DREAMCAST?

Matt: PC to DC? That's pretty much impossible I think. Unless the Dreamcast added on some sort of hard drive add-on. I know they're talking about some sort of Zip drive add-on so I guess that would be possible for storage and everything but...I guess that would be possible, but I don't think it would be very probable.

Chen: That's not where we're really headed.

GR: WHAT ABOUT N64?

Matt: The biggest thing about that would be the actual hardware to read the cartridge in. Because you don't want people to be able to use CDs for ROMs. Obviously then you're talking about people stealing a lot of software, so we'd have to make some type of hardware—a plug-in—actually, anything is possible.

Chen: As a company, we're looking for next-generation. We're not looking to go backwards, but looking to take something and go forwards. People always ask me about going backwards, like PC to PlayStation. We're basically about enhancing the graphics and making the gaming experience a lot better.

GR: SO YOU LOOK AT CONVERTING THE N64 GAMES TO DREAMCAST AS GOING BACKWARDS?

Chen: No, no. That would be forward, but you're talking about a lot of money invested in the hardware. I don't know what a CD costs to press, but it's nowhere near the cost of making an actual cartridge reader with cables that hook into your Dreamcast and the amount of money you'd have to put into that just to get it launched would probably be astronomical.

GR: THEORETICALLY IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE, THOUGH?

Matt: It is.

GR: SO COULD THE BLEEMCAST TECHNOLOGY BE PUT ONTO A CHIPSET POSSIBLY?

Matt: I don't know. That, I don't know at all.

GR: IS IT POSSIBLE FOR BLEEM! TO SUPPORT MORE THAN THE 100 OR SO TITLES LISTED PER BLEEM! PAK OR IS THE 100 WHAT YOU GUARANTEE?

[Matt excuses himself from the conversation.]

Kempe: It will only play those 100 games listed on the pak. It won't play anything else. If you try another game, it won't work.

Chen: The reason we did that was to try to make it a bit more user friendly. In our original product we ran into a problem where we would leave it open-ended and say, "Hey, it plays these games listed on the back, but you can try others anyway." And that would leave it too open-ended where someone would try a game that wouldn't work and people would get upset with our product and say our product was faulty or whatever.

Rather than do that, we decided to make each bleem! Pak play 100 games—you know, it's idiot proof—those 100 games work. We keep it simple, straight forward, leave it less open-ended. It eliminates confusion.

Kempe: Man, you have some pretty hard questions! Normally when people do these interviews, they ask when the game's coming out or something!

GR: YEAH...WE'RE GOING FOR ANALYTICAL AND INFORMATIVE. THANKS. WHICH GAMES HAVE THE BEST RESULTS USING BLEEM! AND WHY?

Kempe: Well, so far I would say that bleem! for Dreamcast works on almost all of the games that we tested, so it's really hard to say because we have to test the games all the way through sometimes and check the different levels. It's very difficult to say. The games we ran demos at E3 were the closest to perfect that we could muster up: GT2, Ridge Racer 4, Omega Boost. Other than that, you'd have to ask our Tech supervisors. [Matt comes back.]

I was saying other than GT2, RR 4...

Chen: Are we even giving out game lists right now?

Kempe: The biggest thing is probably the more time we spend on it. Originally before E3, we kinda knew what we wanted to show although we wanted to show more games but it just got down to the wire.

Matt: We just decided to show what people would really be interested in. We could've shown 2D games but 2D games don't look that much better. They look nice. They run okay. The main reason is just the ones we worked on.

GR: WHAT I WAS LEANING TOWARD IS NOT NECESSARILY PER TITLE, BUT PER GENERATION OF PLAYSTATION GAMES. AS IN, THE FIRST SET OF PLAYSTATION GAMES, THE LAST SET—THE MORE TECHNICALLY ADVANCED LEVEL OF PLAYSTATION GAMES. WHICH ONES WORK BETTER?

Matt: The stuff that's closest to the newest. Not necessarily what came out yesterday, but something that's come out in the last year or so. Those games, up until now, are probably the ones that are working the best. It's not necessarily that Randy has gotten a lot better, but the companies are coding their games better now.

GR: THE MOST RECENT GAMES THAT HAVE COME OUT, WILL THEY BE SUPPORTED BY BLEEMCAST ALSO SINCE IT'S NOT OPEN-ENDED ANYMORE?

Chen: A game that came out yesterday probably will not be in the first set of bleem! Paks. We're working off a best-selling list of most popular titles. We're trying to fit it with what a lot of gamers have into their library of games that they like to play. The more recent ones are more difficult. We have to get a hold of that title, we have to test that title all the way through, and those will probably be available in the later bleem! Paks.

GR: IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF ANY OPEN-ENDED BLEEM! PAK, THEN?

Chen: I don't think we'll ever do that. It'll leave so much margin for error.

GR: HOW DOES THE MEMORY CARD TO VMU WORK?

Matt: Basically, I don't know exactly how it's going to be perceived to the user, but it'll be something along the lines of when you start bleem!, it'll take a certain number of blocks off the Sega VMU, it'll format them to what RAM it needs to use so it can use them, and then, as far as gameplay, they'll be just like the PlayStation memory cards. They won't even see a difference. Basically, that's the way the PC version works as well. You just set up a virtual memory card and then it just saves like normal. It should be the same thing.

GR: LASTLY, ARE THE CONTROLLERS VIA THE BLEEM! POD RESULTING IN 100 PERCENT SYNC ACCURACY?

Kempe: Goodnight, L.A. [Laughter. Kempe exits.]

Matt: I'm not sure if they're 100 percent accurate yet, but as far as the analog control—is that what you're saying?

GR: ANALOG, DIGITAL, LIGHT GUNS...WHATEVER.

Matt: Well, so far as a digital PlayStation controller and the analog PlayStation controller, both can plug into the adapter that we have and all the buttons map exactly correct. As far as light guns, they haven't been programmed in. It probably hasn't been yet, but if bleem! Pak 1 has something in it that requires a light gun game in it, then...

Chen: If we put a light gun game on bleem! Pak 1, we'll make sure that we have product that works with a light gun.

GR: STEERING WHEELS AND ALL?

Matt: Yeah, steering wheels and all.

Chen: We'll strive to support the steering wheel and vibration. **GR**

WANNA TOUCH MY PIKACHU?

When word first leaked that Nintendo was going to be releasing a newly styled N64, anticipation ran high that this would be Nintendo's answer to the PS One. Perhaps this was going to be a new, super-compact N64, along the lines of the Super Famicom Jr. or top-loading NES. Imagine the shock when it turned out that Nintendo had actually designed a BIGGER N64, one with a giant Pikachu slapped on one side of it. When you power on the system, the little guy's cheeks light up. Sure to drive the kiddies frothing mad this holiday season, Nintendo's Pikachu edition N64 should be out in Japan as you read this, with a U.S. release planned for sometime before Christmas, probably priced around \$99, if no game is included.





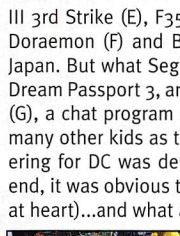
WHERE DO THEY GET ALL THOSE WONDERFUL TOYS?



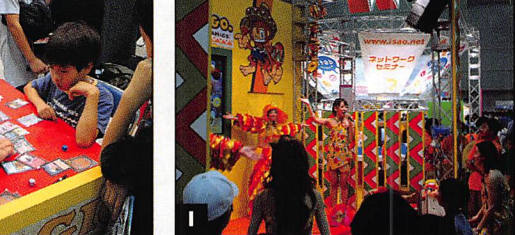
The Next Generation Hobby Fair was held in Makuhari Messe (the largest exhibition center in Japan, where the Tokyo Game Show has been held) on June 24 and 25. TGS typically uses nine to twelve halls, but only three halls were used for this show, as it was targeted primarily to children. The main booths at the show were Nintendo and Bandai, with Sega and SCEI also attracting many of the rug rats. SCEI was a little disappointing, since they only showed Bikkuri Mouse (a PS2 drawing program utilizing a USB mouse) (A), and did not show the PS One or any new titles. Nintendo demonstrated playable Mario Tennis 64, much to the delight of many kids. Right next to the Nintendo booth was a real tennis court where you could learn how to play tennis from a tennis coach and Mario (B). Nintendo also displayed a video of ExciteBike 64 and Shiren 64.



At the Bandai booth, the main product was Hot Wheels (C), but they also set up a host of playable Digital Monster and The Excellent Detective Conan for WonderSwan (D). PlayStation versions of these two titles were also demonstrated.



In Japan, Sega hasn't captured the imaginations of kids, since most of their Dreamcast titles are targeted to adults (or hardcore video game fans at least). At this show, Sega demonstrated not only previous titles such as Street Fighter III 3rd Strike (E), F355 Challenge, Jet Set Radio, Samba De Amigo (I), etc., but also Doraemon (F) and Bikkuriman—two very popular TV animation shows for kids in Japan. But what Sega really concentrated on was Network play. They demonstrated Dream Passport 3, and many lovely ladies were showing how to chat using Ch@b Talk (G), a chat program available anytime from the browser that lets the kids talk with many other kids as they surf the web. The other big news was that Magic The Gathering for DC was demonstrated (H), although no photography was allowed. In the end, it was obvious that this show was aimed at the younger audience (and children at heart)...and what a show they got!



2D LEGEND SNK, MAY BE KO'D

The future of the once-mighty hardware/software manufacturer SNK is looking bleak. Approximately 80 programmers have left the company in Japan and are now working for Capcom. Sources also indicate that Capcom could acquire the rights to some of SNK's biggest properties, such as Fatal Fury and Samurai Shodown (sort of adding an odd twist to the upcoming Capcom vs. SNK game, eh?). While the combination of some of the most talented programmers in the business could mean the greatest 2D development studio in gaming, it doesn't bode well for SNK Japan.

KONAMI NEWS



Latokiev, a swordsman from the Kingdom of Harmonia.

Konami has revealed that a spin-off of their Gensu Suikoden games is coming to Japan this September. Titled Suikoden Gaiden Vol. 1, this game isn't an RPG, but a graphic-text adventure that takes place during the time frame of Suikoden II. The main character will be Nash

Meanwhile, the bell has already tolled for SNK in North America and Europe, as it has officially closed its U.S. offices, pulled its Neo Geo Pocket handheld from store shelves, and canceled its future plans to bring out any games for Dreamcast, PlayStation, or NGP. According to SNK in an official statement, they are withdrawing from the market so the company can "regroup and reevaluate its worldwide marketing strategy." However, SNK is negotiating with other publishers to possibly bring out their console properties in the U.S., so Metal Slug X, King of Fighters '99, Evolution, and Cool Cool Toon could see the light of day yet, although no deals have been reached.

Additionally, SNK is rumored to be ending support of their Neo Geo coin-op system worldwide; King of Fighters 2000 may be the final title. On the plus side, SNK will still be supporting consoles and the Neo Geo Pocket in Japan, so new games and products like the upcoming MP3 player will be available as imports.

IT'S NO BETA

In a move that could change the landscape of video game consoles forever, Sony announced in Japan that they will make the PlayStation 2 and original PlayStation "open formats." In English, that means that Sony will license its technology to other companies, so Mitsubishi could potentially sell its own model of the PlayStation 2—and so could Nintendo, for that matter. The technology could also be used for purposes other than game playing; the Emotion Engine could wind up powering a laptop computer, or even a microwave oven. Many industry experts are comparing Sony's move to the Beta vs. VHS battles in the 1980s, where any manufacturer was allowed to make VHS, but Beta remained exclusive to one company (ironically Sony) and withered away. Hopefully consoles competing with PS2 won't share the same fate, but Sony has upped the ante and given the competition a lot to think about.

WATCH YOUR NOSE

Square to make Nintendo games

Well, not quite, but Nintendo has indeed created a new subsidiary called Brown Brown (where do they get these names?), staffed by former Square members, specifically those that worked on the Secret of Mana and Saga Frontier. The first title due from this new Nintendo first-party will be for Game Boy Advance. This multiplayer RPG, tentatively called Magical Vacation, is currently set for a release sometime next year. Slowly but surely, Nintendo is working towards having Square games again.

SEGA'S ROOTS REMAIN ARCADE PERFECT

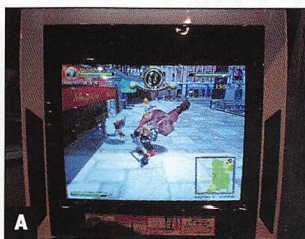
Sega held a private show June 23 to showcase their upcoming arcade titles. Tokyo Bus Tour Guide, Giant Gram 2000, and Slash Out (A)—the most popular title at the show—were among the many new titles on display.

Slash Out is a fantasy version of Spike Out. As in Spike Out, Slash Out can be played in simultaneous cooperation with four players by using the multi-player link system. This time, you will fight in eight large fantasy-themed stages using swords and magic. The graphics are eye-popping and sounds are light and jaunty. In addition, Slash Out is a Naomi-based arcade title, which would make it easy for Sega to convert it to Dreamcast in the near future.

Those of you who read our last issue may remember a bus simulator called Tokyo Bus Tour Guide for Dreamcast. Now, TBGTG has been converted to the Naomi arcade board (B) with more detailed graphics, a big steering wheel, blinkers, an announce button, and a door open/close button. Crazy racing fans will find it very frustrating driving within the speed limit, stopping at red lights, etc, but it is very fun to play.

Giant Gram 2000—All Japan Pro Wrestling 3—is the third series of Sega's famous wrestling game (C). It contains not only recent All Japan wrestlers but also previous All Japan wrestling heroes such as Giant Baba, The Destroyer, and Jumbo Tsuruta. Like the previous series, GG2000 is linkable to the Dreamcast version (to be released August 10) by using your VMU, allowing you to play with your wrestlers from home.

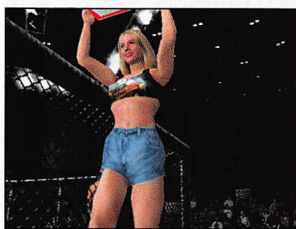
Other, much-less-prominent, titles drawing the crowds were Cosmic Smash (a 3D squash racket game in which you have to break blocks) (D), Nittele Shiki! Mirai Yosou Studio (a fortune-telling game), Kureyon Kids (a drawing game using a light pen) (E), and Soreike! Shouboutai (a kid's medal game). Although these are all excellent games, we're still waiting for Virtua Fighter 4.



CHILDREN OF THE CORN BE WARNED...

It isn't often we are called upon to take a trip out to Iowa. Yes, Iowa... home of, well, lots of open land and a love for John Deere. So why would a company like Crave round us up to take us out there? Three strong words: Ultimate Fighting Championship.

It is hard to say anything rash about a state that has no hang-ups about sanctioning an UFC bout, where competitors are known for dislocating, breaking and pummeling each other bloody for the fame, fortune and glory. Well, OK, how about for the pure sense of barbaric sport.



Our specific location in the land that time forgot was blessed Cedar Rapids, where on the day of

the event we savored a hearty breakfast with many of the competitors, coaches and managers. We definitely took advantage of the opportunity hob-knobbing with the industry's best while sharing fruit and back bacon with the UFC's elite. We even had the chance to fight some of the guys, thanks to the kiosks set up around the dining hall.

Later that morning we had a chance to step inside the honorable Octagon while final lighting preparations were being handled. There we met legendary Andre "The Chief" Roberts, where he politely invited us into the ring before commencing to give each of us a proper ass whoopin'.

Once we were able to climb out of the blood-stained fight arena, away from the herculean native American, we enjoyed a quaint trip out to the Amana Colonies. A stone's throw from Cedar Rapids, this community had us tasting some of Iowa's finest cheese and wine, to pass the time until the night's main event.

It all came down to this...the UFC fight. It might have been the constant smell of Quaker Oaks or just the perfect blend of mixed drinks and the stewing rage inside the arena. Whatever it was, the UFC event had us on our feet, yelling at the top of our lungs as the fighters gave it their all.



One can't appreciate nor comprehend the brutality and sheer understanding for each fighting style. These guys submit their bodies to upwards of 25 minutes of pummeling for the chance for a title belt. What was even more striking is how accurate Crave has re-created the sport.

Crave, the UFC and a missing tooth will always come to mind when I think of Iowa. Good times, good times.



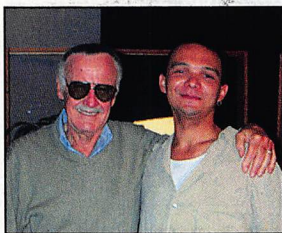
UBI SOFT, I BE FAST

Former 1997 Formula One World Champion Jacques Villeneuve has officially lent his name to Ubi Soft's forthcoming Villeneuve: Virtual Velocity racing game for Dolphin, PS2, and Xbox. This is significant because Villeneuve, currently driving for the BAR Honda F1 team, has often been absent from officially licensed F1 titles because of his hefty licensing fees. Now, he will have a game of his own, lending his incredible experience and worldwide popularity to Ubi Soft's forthcoming fantasy driving game. Very little is currently known about Virtual Velocity, however, other than Jacques' high profile involvement.



LEE SPEAKS FOR SPIDEY

As if Stan Lee wasn't immortal enough, now his voice will forever be imbedded in the digital realm of video games. Lee will be narrating the video game version of his most famous creation, Spider-Man. Being developed by Activision, the game will also include several of the voices heard in the popular Spider-Man animated television series, including the voice of Spidey, Rino Romano. Other characters included in the game are Black Cat (Jennifer Hale), Venom and Scorpion (Darran Norris), JJJ and Rhino (Dee Bradley Baker), and an unnamed villain voiced by 1970s film and TV actor Efram Zimbalist, Jr. Look for Spider-Man due out later this summer.



VIRTUAL SUPERSTARS?

Ai Fukami, the new heroine of Namco's Ridge Racer V for PS2, has made the jump from video games to bona-fide modeling, becoming an advertisement talent for Toyota's Car Navigation System. Toyota has used her image for the advertisements of its DVD Car Navigation System since June. This is the first time that Namco's game character has appeared on another company's advertising. Namco said that this is just a beginning, and that they plan to expand this kind of activity and capitalize on the popularity of their characters, this one in particular.

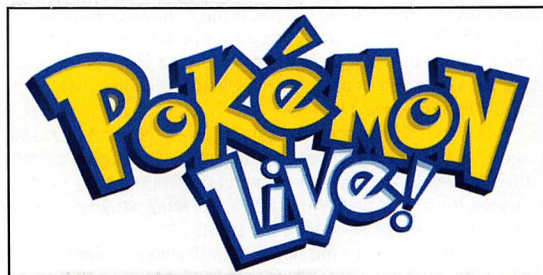
Looking at other makers' game characters, Toro, a cat in Docodemo Issho (a pet communication game from SCEI), appears on a Calpis advertisement, and according to Mr. Mizuguchi, producer for Sega's Space Channel 5, P&G has asked to use Ulala (the main female character from that game, natch) to appear in a sanitary napkin advertisement. Insert your own punch line here.

WHEREFORE ART THOU PIKACHU?

It takes some actors decades to make it onto a Broadway stage, and out of the millions who attempt it, only a select few ever set foot on NYC's prestigious Radio City Music Hall. It took Pikachu and his Pokémon gang a scant two years to get there. This is not a joke. Nintendo of America and Radio City Entertainment

announced that "Pokémon Live!"—a musical theatre production—will start a nationwide tour beginning with shows at Radio City Music Hall from September 20 through October 1.

The 90-minute production will feature a live cast of Pokémon characters as well as elements of animation, special effects and audience participation. The shows will have a storyline taken from the games and television show.



We imagine that as you read this, some obtuse method actor is in a rehearsal studio somewhere in NYC asking the "Pokémon Live!" director, "So...um... in this particular scene...exactly what is my motivation as Jigglypuff?"

BILL BAGS BUNGIE

We've written in the past few issues that Microsoft will not be a successful gaming company without killer, bona-fide first party titles. Microsoft took a small step (and no doubt the first of many) in that direction on June 19 by acquiring the extremely talented Chicago-based development house Bungie Software Products Corp., the creators of the highly anticipated, anime-inspired, action game Oni (cover story feature in the June issue of GR).

Interestingly enough, at the same time that it sold its 19.9 percent equity interest in Bungie to Microsoft, Take 2 Interactive announced that it acquired all right, title, and interest to select Bungie game properties, including and especially Oni, since its developers at Rockstar are creating the PS2 version.

Mostly known for its PC/Mac series Myth, Bungie has yet to really make its presence known on the console side, but is currently the most well known of Microsoft's other game developer houses — FASA Interactive Technologies Inc. and Access Software Inc.

"This acquisition reflects our commitment to growing our business with a strong portfolio of quality games for the PC and Xbox platforms," said Ed Fries, vice president of games publishing at Microsoft. "Bungie's highly talented team consistently delivers award-winning games, and we're looking forward to supporting their creative spirit here at Microsoft."

"This is an opportunity to combine the strength of two outstanding software companies: Bungie's talent for creating great games and Microsoft's strength in distribution," said Alexander Seropian, founder and CEO of Bungie Software Products. "Microsoft will provide us with the resources and infrastructure we need to continue to build great games and make them available on a worldwide scale. We are also looking forward to helping define the Xbox platform, which may soon be the world's premier game console."

GAMESHARK BITES DC IMPORT GAMES

For everyone who's wanted to buy a Japanese Dreamcast game but hasn't had the cash to get import hardware or the gumption to mod their system, a solution is here—the GameShark. The recently-released GameShark CDX from Interact isn't just a "game enhancer," it also lets you play Japanese games with little hassle on U.S. Dreamcasts and even lets you play American games on Japanese systems.

According to Interact, this import compatibility isn't really an intended feature. "The way that we make the product just happens to let you play Japanese games," said an Interact spokesperson.

All users need to do to play imports is attach the GameShark like normal and go through the menus to begin the game without cheats. When prompted, remove the GameShark CD and put in the game disc (just as you would for using a U.S. game) and voila, you'll be playing games that may never make it to the U.S.

So far every game we've tested with the GameShark (including Sega GT, Touken Retsuden 4, Sakura Taisen and King of Fighters '99 Evolution) has been playable on the U.S. system, but Marvel vs. Capcom 2 suffered from skipping music on some systems. Though every game may not be 100 percent compatible, an affordable solution for DC imports is here.



by now, you know the drill.



The logo for the anime 'Mr. Driller' is displayed in a stylized, bubbly font. The word 'Mr.' is in red with a yellow star for the dot, and 'DRILLER' is in large, red, rounded letters with a blue drill bit integrated into the letter 'R'. The entire logo has a thick red outline and a blue shadow effect.



Mr. Driller™ & © 1999 Namco Ltd. All Rights Reserved. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Licensed by Nintendo. Game Boy and Game Boy Color are trademarks of Nintendo of America Inc. © 1989, 1998 Nintendo of America Inc. Sega, Dreamcast, and the Dreamcast logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Enterprises, Ltd. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. Actual screen shots are for use with the Sega PlayStation console.

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YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS



top ten selling playstation titles



*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JUNE 18-24 2000

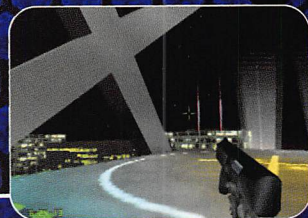
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|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. LEGEND OF DRAGON | SONY | 6. SYPHON FILTER | 989 STUDIOS |
| 2. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | ACTIVISION | 7. GRAN TURISMO 2 | SONY |
| 3. SPEC OPS | TAKE 2 | 8. TRIPLE PLAY 2001 | EA |
| 4. WWF SMACKDOWN! | THQ | 9. LEGEND OF MANA | SQUARE |
| 5. SYPHON FILTER 2 | 989 STUDIOS | 10. SW EPISODE 1: JEDI | LUCASARTS |

top ten selling nintendos4 titles



*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JUNE 18-24 2000

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------------|----------|
| 1. PERFECT DARK | NINTENDO | 6. MARIO PARTY 2 | NINTENDO |
| 2. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | ACTIVISION | 7. WWF ATTITUDE | ACCLAIM |
| 3. POKÉMON STADIUM | NINTENDO | 8. SUPER SMASH BROS. | NINTENDO |
| 4. EXCITEBIKE 64 | NINTENDO | 9. GOLDENEYE 007 | NINTENDO |
| 5. STARCRAFT 64 | NINTENDO | 10. NAMCO MUSEUM 64 | NAMCO |



top ten selling dreamcast titles



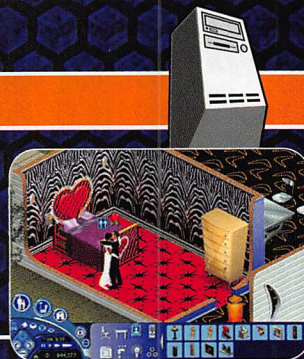
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JUNE 18-24 2000

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|----------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | ACTIVISION | 6. RAINBOW 6 | MAJESCO |
| 2. STREET FIGHTER 3 | CAPCOM | 7. CRAZY TAXI | SEGA |
| 3. GAUNTLET LEGENDS | MIDWAY | 8. VIRTUAL ON: OT | ACTIVISION |
| 4. DRACONUS: Cult of Wyrms | CRABE | 9. NBA 2K | SEGA |
| 5. RES EVIL: Code Veronica | CAPCOM | 10. SONIC ADVENTURE | SEGA |

top ten selling pc titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JUNE 18-24 2000

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1. THE SIMS | MAXIS | 6. DEUS EX | EIDOS |
| 2. WHO WANTS...MILLION 2 | DISNEY | 7. SIMCITY 3000 UNLIMITED | MAXIS |
| 3. RLR COASTER TYCOON | HASBRO | 8. BACKYARD BASEBALL | HUMONGOUS |
| 4. SHOGUN TOTAL WAR | EA | 9. RLR CSTR TYCOON: Cork | HASBRO |
| 5. VAMPIRE: Masquer. R. | ACTIVISION | 10. SIM THEME PARK WORLD | EA |



top ten selling overall console titles



*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JUNE 18-24 2000

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|--------------------------|----------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. LEGEND OF DRAGON-PS | SONY | 6. WHO WANTS...MILLION-PS | DISNEY |
| 2. PERFECT DARK-N64 | NINTENDO | 7. T. HAWK PRO SKATER-PS | ACTIVISION |
| 3. THE SIMS-PC | MAXIS | 8. SPEC OPS-PS | TAKE 2 |
| 4. POKÉMON YELLOW-GBC | NINTENDO | 9. T HAWK PRO SKATER-N64 | ACTIVISION |
| 5. PMON TRADING CARD-GBC | NINTENDO | 10. WWF SMACKDOWN!-PS | THQ |

world republic top ten games

top ten japanese titles

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. PERSONA 2: EP | PS | 6. JET SET RADIO | DC |
| 2. SCANDAL | PS2 | 7. SEIKAIDEN TV ANIMATION | PS |
| 3. JIKKYOU J. LEAGUE | PS | 8. POCKET DIGIMON WORLD | PS |
| 4. GUNDAM: Giren's Ambition | PS | 9. MY SUMMER | PS |
| 5. SF III 3rd STRIKE | DC | 10. EXCITEBIKE 64 | N64 |

* FROM JUNE 26 ~ JULY 2

top ten u.s. titles

- | | | | |
|--------------------|----|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. WWF SMACKDOWN | PS | 6. F1 2000 | PS |
| 2. POKÉMON RED | GB | 7. POKÉMON STADIUM | N64 |
| 3. POKÉMON BLUE | GB | 8. JIMMY WHITE'S 2: Cueball | PS |
| 4. SYPHON FILTER 2 | PS | 9. GRAN TURISMO 2 | PS |
| 5. MEDIEVIL 2 | PS | 10. TOY STORY 2 | PS |

* WEEK ENDING JUNE 16 2000

← gamers' republic top ten games

* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH JULY 5 2000



d. halverson



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|-----------------------|---------|
| 1. FUR FIGHTERS | DC |
| 2. JET SET RADIO | DC |
| 3. METAL SLUG 3 | NEO GEO |
| 4. FINAL FANTASY IX | PS |
| 5. SPAWN | DC |
| 6. SUPER MAGNETIC NEO | DC |
| 7. VAGRANT STORY | PS |
| 8. WACKY RACES | DC |
| 9. VIRTUA TENNIS | DC |
| 10. SILVER | DC |



b. siechter



- | | |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1. CHRONO CROSS | PS |
| 2. FINAL FANTASY IX | PS |
| 3. SF III 3rd STRIKE | DC |
| 4. TOY STORY 2 | DC |
| 5. WACKY RACES | DC |
| 6. MARIO 64 | N64 |
| 7. BUG! | SATURN |
| 8. POWER STONE 2 | DC |
| 9. NAMCO MUSEUM | DC |
| 10. NBA2K1 | DC |



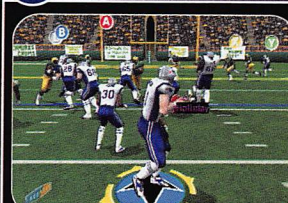
milze hobbs



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|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. FERRARI F355 | DC |
| 2. FINAL FANTASY IX | PS |
| 3. JET SET RADIO | DC |
| 4. FIFA SOCCER | PS2 |
| 5. SEAMAN | DC |
| 6. POWER STONE 2 | DC |
| 7. TVDJ | PS2 |
| 8. MR. T GETS A JOB | PS |
| 9. TOKYO XTREME RCR 2 | DC |
| 10. MS. PAC-MAN MIM | PS |



t. stratton



- | | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. NFL 2K1 | DC |
| 2. NBA 2K1 | DC |
| 3. GIANTS: Citizen Kabuto | PC |
| 4. UFC | DC |
| 5. ALISIA DRAGON | GEN |
| 6. VIB RIBBON | PS |
| 7. TYSON'S PUNCHOUT | NES |
| 8. SPACE CHANNEL 5 | DC |
| 9. RIDGE RACER V | PS2 |
| 10. T. HAWK PRO SKTR 2 | PS |



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|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. FIFA SOCCER | PS2 |
| 2. MARIO TENNIS | N64 |
| 3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER | DC |
| 4. NFL 2K1 | DC |
| 5. NBA 2K1 | DC |
| 6. NFL GAMEDAY | PS |
| 7. MADDEN 2001 | PS |
| 8. ESPN MLSoccer | PS |
| 9. BLITZ 2001 | DC |
| 10. CRYSTALIS | GBC |



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|------------------------|-----|
| 1. DRAGON WARR. 1&2 | GBC |
| 2. METAL GEAR SOLID | GBC |
| 3. DRIVER | GBC |
| 4. TOMB RAIDER | GBC |
| 5. VALKYRIE PROFILE | PS |
| 6. DAIKATANA ADV. | GBC |
| 7. FIFA SOCCER | PS2 |
| 8. HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 | DC |
| 9. GRAN TURISMO 2 | PS |
| 10. CROC | GBC |



bob elmquist



- | | |
|---------------------|-----|
| 1. PERFECT DARK | N64 |
| 2. MDK 2 | DC |
| 3. LEGEND OF DRAGON | PS |
| 4. CHRONO CROSS | PS |
| 5. VAGRANT STORY | PS |
| 6. EARTH 2150 | PC |
| 7. DEUS EX | PC |
| 8. NFL 2K1 | DC |
| 9. NBA 2K1 | DC |
| 10. ICEWIND DALE | PC |



c hofmann



- | | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. LUNAR 2: Eternal Blue | PS |
| 2. FINAL FANTASY IX | PS |
| 3. MARVEL vs CAPCOM 2 | DC |
| 4. METAL SLUG 3 | NEO GEO |
| 5. LEGEND OF MANA | PS |
| 6. MEGA MAN EXTREME | GBC |
| 7. RPG MAKER | PS |
| 8. RES EVIL: Code Ver. | DC |
| 9. SUPER MAGNETIC NEO | DC |
| 10. MM LEGENDS 2 | PS |

I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.

I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.
my species. I will not mate outside my species.



CELLULÄR
TRANSFER

TRANSLATOR

PRESSION

NONSMOKER

ON FOOD

CRITICALLY
WRITTEN

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EVIL TWIN

Cyprien's Chronicles

BY BRADY FIECHTER

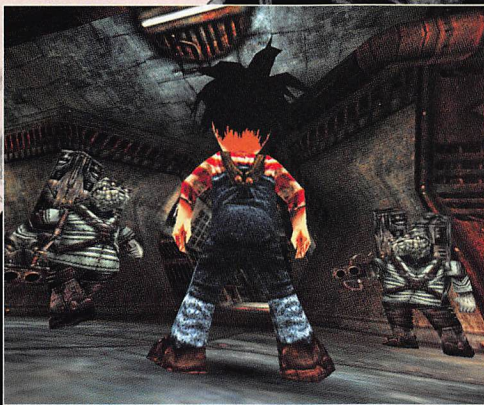
Once upon a time, in a bizarre and twisted nightmare far beyond the waking world, there lived...



Even in its infancy, the world in *Evil Twin* is one of the most distinct and imaginative creations I've seen in a video game in a long time. First-time developers In Utero have dreamed up a visual place that has the same strengths as the likes of *Mario 64*, *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and *Rayman 2*—grandly inventive, richly atmospheric, spilling over with sights far removed from reality. It's as if they've tapped into the mind of Tim Burton and Jules Verne, adding strange wonders from their own imaginations to give shape and form to the phantasmagoric island universe of *Evil Twin*.

The game follows the plight of a child named Cyprien, who is locked in a realm of dreams. This setup has granted In Utero a freedom of surreal design, leading to an intriguing blend of enchantment and stylized gloom. Everything is dusky and moody, sometimes solemn and truly dream-like, sometimes twisted and creepy.

And then there are the remarkable character designs, which look not unlike some delightfully bizarre aberration you might expect only a child's sleeping mind to conjure up: a decaying, half-Santa Claus, half-leprechaun monster; a humanoid lizard



mutation dressed in candy-cane-striped pajamas, stomping around in enormous, radioactive steel boots. All of these monsters inhabit a world constructed of much wood, brass, pipes, steel, shadows, and torn, weathered walls and floors surrounded by looming support structures.

Perhaps one of the best examples of In Utero's ambitions for Evil Twin is an early area in the game, a library where superbly detailed textures paint rows of books climbing to the edges of the ceiling. On one of the walls hangs a canvas, adorned with rough pencil sketches of archways, and disturbed underfoot is a disheveled pile of

drawings that look like rough drafts discarded by a frustrated Leonardo da Vinci. Outside, it's raining, but stacks of sunlight pour through the many windows, illuminating dust particles lazily floating through the air. Near the top of the room, big gears turn outside a pair of windows that look like the eyes of a monster, powering a system of giant pencils that transport you to a walkway far above.

From the truly unique visual design to the attention to detail to the entertaining platforming gameplay, this level illustrates the kind of sweeping ideas forging the foundation to Evil Twin. And yet when





speaking with Evil Twin project manager Stephane Hernandez, I came to realize that my exposure to the game's world is but a glimpse of the true adventure to come.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: TELL US ABOUT HOW EVIL TWIN CAME TO BE. DIDN'T IT ORIGINALLY START OUT AS CONCEPTUAL ART FOR A CARTOON?

Stephane Hernandez: Indeed, the original idea was to provide a concept for a TV series mixing 3D animation and 2D cartoon. This series would have talked about the numerous fears that everyone had when they were a child: like the monster below the bed, the dark area at the end of the garden or the first time your father took the wheels out of your 4-wheel bicycle and turned it into a real adult bicycle. It was a great concept, but clearly more childish than what Evil Twin has turned into. The concept of Evil twin aims to attract our generation, not just kids.

GR: WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO TURN IT INTO A GAME?

SH: Canal + loved the idea but it didn't fit their current TV program, so they pushed us to develop a game concept for their multimedia branch. This didn't happen but Sega quickly followed and almost signed the game. This was a sign for us that we were holding something good! Ultimately, it was Ubi Soft who proved most tenacious and willing to commit. We are now very happy that it turned out this way, since Ubi Soft's strong internal support has made it possible for us to aim at the very AAA title we were dreaming of.

GR: EXPLAIN THE STORY THAT DRIVES THE GAME.

SH: The story takes place in the very dreams of Cyprien, an orphan kid (yet are they only dreams?). which are deeply twisted and corrupted by a dark influence. On his birthday, Cyprien flees the party, which his orphan friends organised for him. Sad and angry, he finds himself sucked into a dreamlike and twisted world of dreams, and against his own will and with no knowledge of the reason of his presences Cyprien quickly realises that all of his friends, all of his world, have also been captured and perverted by a mysterious threat. A dense plot will carry the boy through the eight islands and their varied population—half-men, wizards, and mon-

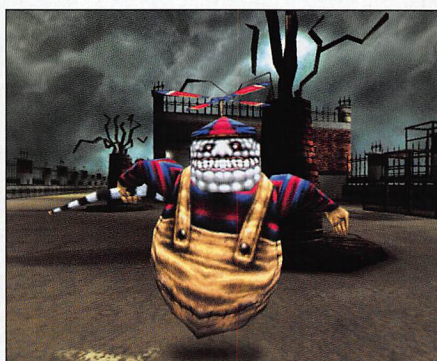
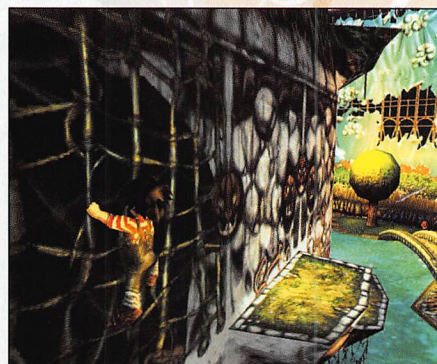
sters—until he meets the source of all this evil—the monstrous Evil Twin—and realises that... Hey, that's a surprise! [And] that will remain a surprise!

The final battle between Cyprien and the Evil Twin, a representation of the struggle of every young man against its own selfish and destructive sides, shall restore the peace and stability in the world of dreams. To help him through his quest, Cyprien will be able to transform at (almost) any time into the powerful Super-Hero of his dreams, as well as use a series of new skills acquired when he set each of his friends free.

GR: DOES EVIL TWIN HAVE AN EVOLVING STORYLINE OR IS IT MORE STRAIGHT ACTION/PLATFORM?

SH: The storyline is one of the strong points in the game. It will be rather linear, but full of surprises and weird encounters, and a real mix of gameplay elements.

GR: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE GAMEPLAY IN ET? ARE YOU GOING FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY ORIGINAL?





SH: Gameplay was inspired from Mario, Crash and Zelda. It is rather classic gameplay but with a lot of surprises—two characters in one, funny upgradable skills—and a strong will to tune it to perfection, in the line of what was accomplished for Rayman2.

Maybe the strongest influence all the way through has been Charles Dickens, with his fine descriptions of tough young orphans living in the London streets at the end of the last century.

GR: THE GAME WORLD SEEMS VERY SURREAL. WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

SH: We are trying to put gamers into their nightmares, the ones we've all had since childhood.

GR: DO YOU FEEL ATMOSPHERE WILL BE A BIG PART OF THE EVIL TWIN EXPERIENCE?

SH: Atmosphere is the key – a mix of fairy tale and dark nightmares. One of the strong points of the game is probably the fact there is not a single texture re-used from one island to another! This means that an entirely new set of textures has been drawn for each island, for a total of about 600 Mb of uncompressed textures. This is a luxury for sure, but it allowed In Utero to give totally distinct atmospheres to each island.

GR: THE ARTWORK IN THE GAME IS STUNNING. HOW DO YOU GUYS COME UP WITH IT? ANY MOVIES OR ART PLAY INTO YOUR DESIGN VISIONS? TIM BURTON HAS TO BE PART OF THE EQUATION.

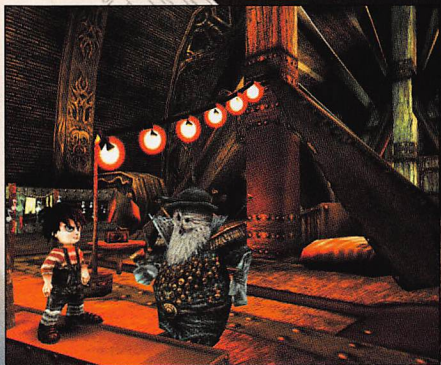
SH: Yes, we are crazy about Tim's work! He is clearly a strong source of inspiration for our artists—especially *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

The graphics team is coached by [artistic director] Stephan Bachelet who brought up this unique style, sometimes inspired by cult movies (the *City of Lost Children*, Tim Burton's films), or European & American comic books (especially Bill "Elektra" Sienkiewicz), as well as Japanese mangas.

As far as Cyprien is concerned, there wasn't any conscious "model" as such that lead to the character design. For instance, the initial look of the character was closer to a crazy, skinny drag queen than to the little boy we know now. We noticed afterwards similarities with other heroes such as Calvin from *Calvin & Hobbes*, *Littl' Nemo* or even the infamous Chucky. But again, that wasn't conscious.

GR: WHAT ARE YOU ULTIMATELY TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH EVIL TWIN? IS THERE ONE ASPECT OF THE GAME YOU ARE FOCUSING ON, IN AN ATTEMPT TO REALLY SEPARATE IT FROM THE PACK?

SH: Our first objective is to tell a story, to plunge the player in an involving storyline and unique atmosphere and add some fantasy to his (day)dreams. The action gameplay is the means we chose to link the pieces of the story together. So we think that it is the atmosphere, the graphics and the story line, which will truly separate the game from the crowd. However, as we want most players to be able to play through the entire storyline, we have put a lot of effort into ensuring that the action gameplay was fast to take in hand, hugely rewarding and with a level of difficulty properly tuned. We definitely want those who are not masters at 3D jumps (and





they are numerous!) to be able to finish the game.

GR: THE GAME LOOKS TO BLEND 2D AND 3D ACTION. WHICH IS THERE MORE OF IN TERMS OF GAMEPLAY?

SH: There may be a misunderstanding here as the game doesn't have any true 2D elements. The game is in full 3D with a standard third-person camera, but parts will have a fixed or scrolling camera in a view to make gameplay easier (platform sequences especially). I would say that about 3/4 of the game will be in third person, while 1/4 will have fixed or scrolling cameras. We think that action sequences will make about 60 percent of the gaming time (fight, shoot, jump, fly, use special skills), while 40 percent will be spent on the adventure side (exploration, collecting objects, solving puzzles or talking to NPCs).

GR: TELL US ABOUT BOSS BATTLES. WILL THEY BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE GAME?

SH: Each friend becomes a boss in the world of dreams. All bosses are to be fought in several rounds. The final fight against the Evil Twin should last about half an hour!

GR: ANY PUZZLE ELEMENTS IN THE GAME?

SH: Yes. Players pick up objects, bring them to the proper places/people. Also a bit of triggers/buttons puzzles, each with a reward once solved.

GR: WHAT KIND OF WEAPONS DOES THE CHARACTER USE? HE HAS THE SLING SHOT, AND WILL THAT BE HIS PRIMARY TOOL FOR OFFENSE?

SH: As Cyprien, yes. In third-person view, it is a lock system. In first-person view, it is a ballistic system, for precision shots. As Super Cyprien, you have: fireball, lightning bolt, super charge, rodeo attack.

GR: WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE CHARACTER THAT LOOKS LIKE IT'S A SPLIT PERSONALITY OF THE MAIN CHARACTER?

SH: Although Cyprien has a practical slingshot, he will sometimes need a more aggressive and powerful approach to go through some obstacles. Hopefully, because he is evolving in a world of dreams, Cyprien has the ability to transform into the super hero of his dreams, Super Cyprien. You will only be able to do so if you have found the proper bonus. The transformation will then only last for a limited time. So there is a strategic element: "Should I spend my bonus now or wait for a tougher part of the game?" Super Cyprien has white hair, red pulsing eyes and a black costume with chrome effects, surrounded with particles. He runs faster, jumps higher, can throw fireballs and lightning bolts

make a Super-Charge to blast enemies or pieces of the environment. But he can't talk, take objects or solve puzzles, which only Cyprien can do.

GR: WE NOTICED THAT THE MAIN CHARACTER CAN ENTER A LATRINE. ANYTHING INTERESTING HAPPENING THERE?

SH: Not yet, but there is room for a surprise!

GR: IS THE GAME GOING TO BE PRETTY LONG?

SH: There are eight islands, each made of 6 to 7 sub levels [with a specific gameplay style.] So we expect a very good gamer to complete the game in 20 to 25 hours, while a "normal" player would easily spend 30 to 40 hours on it. Is that long enough? Some [of the levels] are typical adventure levels (exploration, object collection), some are more action-oriented (shoot & run), some more platforms... Still, most levels will feature a mix of gameplay and will provide a lot of character interaction.

There is, for instance, a "Nature" island, with dark forests and colorful plants; there is a "School" island with a terrifying schoolyard where trees have metallic branches and where nurses carry loooong needles; there are also a baroque "Food" world, a horrific "Prison" island, a "Flying Boat" level, all with their own ambiances.

GR: LOVE THE MUSIC! WHO'S HANDLING THE SOUND IN THE GAME? WHAT KIND OF THEME ARE YOU GOING FOR?

SH: It is original music done by a friend of ours. Very influenced by Danny Elfman.

GR: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON ET?

SH: Production started in November 1998. But the concept has been floating in our heads for at least five years! Twenty-three persons worked on the project Evil Twin: five 2D artists, four 3D artists, three animators and six programmers.

GR: YOUR FIRST GAME IS FOR PC AND DREAMCAST. BUT HAVE YOU PLAYED ALL OF THE SYSTEMS UP FROM 8-BIT? ARE YOU GAMERS?

SH: The core department of the company is and will remain the development of top quality video games! The founders remain gamers at heart!

GR: WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE GAMES?

SH: I am currently deep into Resident Evil: Code Veronica, which is absolutely terrifying! I am planning to improve at Counter Strikes since it is heavily played at the office. And I always travel with a copy of Soul Calibur, in case I meet a nice female gamer during a business trip.

GR: HOW'S WORKING ON THE DREAMCAST BEEN, COMPARED TO THE PC?

SH: It has been quite painless since our PC engine could be very easily ported to DC. The bulk of the work on DC has been the redesign of the controls and the sound engine.

GR: IF THE GAME IS A HUGE HIT, DO YOU HAVE IDEAS FOR A SEQUEL YET? MAYBE YOU'RE NOT EVEN THINKING THAT FAR AHEAD YET.

We are!



GR: SO YOU MUST KNOW YOU'RE ONTO SOMETHING. WHAT IN EVIL TWIN ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

SH: Nothing yet! The game must ship first before we can say we are proud. But I bet it will be the handling of the character and the rewarding gameplay. **GR**

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MDK2™



As Solid Snake gets set to invade our psyches once again, we take our first revealing look since the big debut

The PS2's most anticipated game to date is slowly forming before our very eyes. We'll have the first in-depth look next month when we blow out the Metal Gear Solid 2 demo DVD being released by Konami. Until then, we have some new screens and a couple of insights into the game that everyone with a PS2 will undoubtedly be playing.

Thus far, Solid Snake has destroyed Metal Gear three times in his video game adventures, and as luck would have it, he'll be going at it yet again. After obtaining a tip that a newly developed Metal Gear, which is far more powerful than the previous models, will be transported to an undisclosed country, an operation to prevent its transportation has been set up by Otacon. During the operation, Snake witnesses the unexpected presence of military forces and Revolver

Ocelot. And again he realizes that he is involved in a national-level conspiracy.

This sets the stage for the massive graphical overload that has been running through everyone's mind since E3. But game director/screenwriter Hideo Kojima will not be content with better graphics alone, and there is to be a similar level of development running beneath the surface of the game. Specifically, enemy behavior patterns will be much more realistic, as a full one third of the powerful Emotion Engine's performance will be allocated to enemy AI. So for example, the enemy will find you if you hide poorly, even if it's just your shadow that is reflected on the floor or wall.

Be sure to join us next month when we take apart Konami's DVD demo, and divulge even more Metal Gear Solid 2 details. GR

SONS OF LIBERTY

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

BY JUN SAHAI

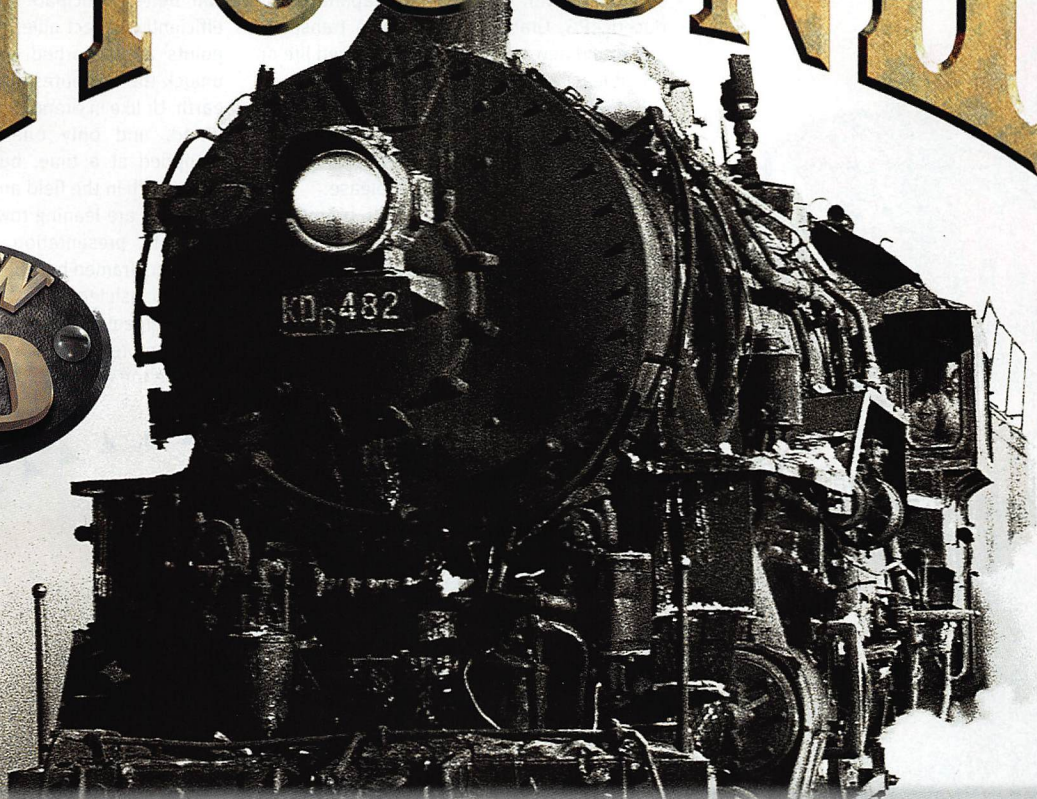


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GRANDIA II

BY JUN SAKAI

The makers of the Sega CD classic Lunar put off part three to concentrate on chapter two of their newest series

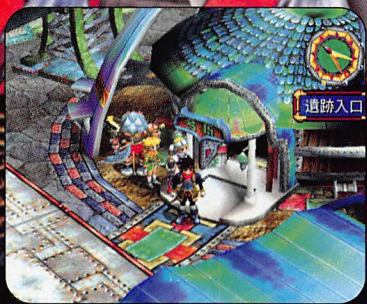
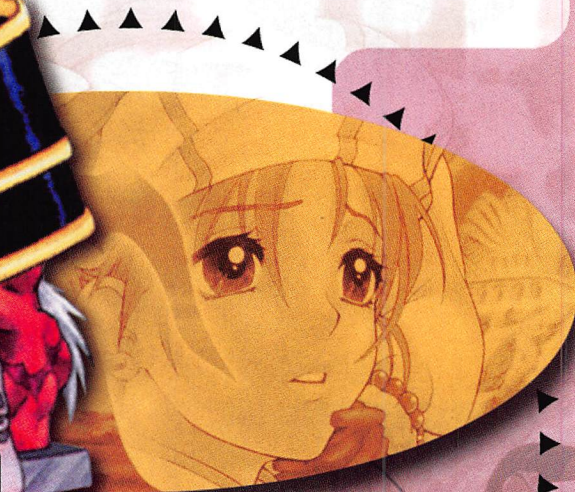
One of the most unfortunate by-products of the Saturn's tepid reception was the absence of an American release of Grandia, a marvelous RPG from the venerable talents at Game Arts. Thanks to Sony's willingness to support us with virtually every Japanese-produced RPG, Grandia underwent a transplant and found new yet markedly weakened life on PS; at least a version of the game exists.

But let's not dwell on the past. What matters now is that Grandia II is blooming on Dreamcast, and an American translation is not far behind the August 3 Japanese release.

While still bright and lively, the Grandia world has certainly transformed, finding new life in its invaluable enhanced

detail. Accompanying the obvious visual improvements are a few gameplay alterations. Encountering enemies is now more tactical and the battle system more refined. A status bar, called an IP gauge, remains, yet now you can better anticipate enemy strategies and efficiently protect allies. To learn skills, magic points are absorbed by Mana Eggs, which unlock the attributes such as fire, water, and earth. Unlike in Grandia, magic cannot be combined, and only one Mana Egg can be equipped at a time, but exchanges can be made both in the field and during a battle.

Battles are leaning towards a much heavier cinematic presentation, with the four party members framed by multiple camera angles as they unleash lengthy attacks. If Grandia II is an improvement over the original in visuals alone, it'll be more than enough to carry the game into the top RPG tier. **GR**



Deadly Bear

Put Teddy on the most endangered species list and **FUR FIGHTERS** on your most wanted. A new kind of game has hit the scene. Part adventure-crammed shoot 'em up, part heavy petting and panting action. Play as all six armed animal liberators against the malevolent fat-cat, General Viggo. It's a raging romp of feline conspiracies, blazing animal combat and unrelenting beaver shots!



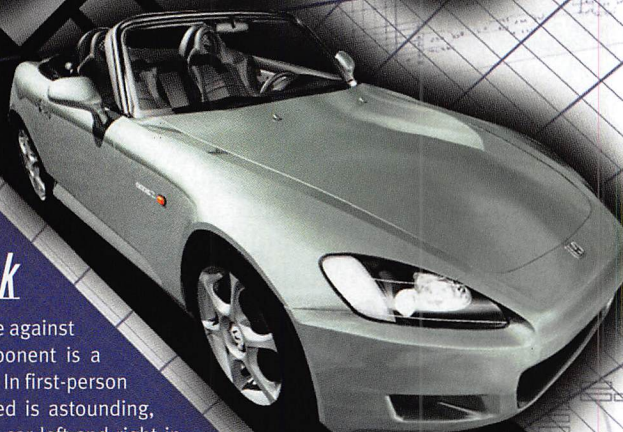
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Flash your lights, drop down a gear, and hold on tight. Genki's slick nocturnal street racer is back

Compared to action games or RPGs, which generally feature multiple objectives and a variety of gameplay styles, a racing game must encapsulate the entirety of its gameplay within the confines of a racetrack. In good examples, this is not a limiting factor. The original Tokyo Xtreme Racer, though very "one-note" in nature, succeeded by creating an intensity through its gameplay that sustained its rather single-minded action. Even so, there was a faint yet nagging emptiness that pervaded Tokyo Xtreme, a feeling that there wasn't quite enough to the game to push it over the top. I have to say that Tokyo Xtreme 2 is saddled with the same feeling, but through virtue of its enhanced visual variety, greater selection of cars, slick look, and still addictive nature, it ultimately succeeds once again.

For those unfamiliar with the concept of Tokyo Xtreme, it's basically a one-on-one nocturnal street battle between you and scores of souped-up rival cars and teams. After a quick flash of headlights, you must outpace your opponent, with every second spent ahead of them sucking energy from their life bar. Once that life bar reaches zero, you've won, collecting prize money to buy new cars or to upgrade your existing vehicle. And just

like the first game, a race against an evenly matched opponent is a very intense experience. In first-person view, the sense of speed is astounding, and gently flowing your car left and right in response to slow-moving traffic and setting up for corners is an exercise in concentration. There is an electricity to the play that is nearly unmatched. It's just too bad that there are times when there aren't rivals to challenge for miles, forcing you to either race around pointlessly for ages or exit out to the menu to start a new day of driving.

There isn't that much positive to be said about Tokyo Xtreme 2 that wouldn't also apply to the first game, but that's less of a backhanded criticism than it might sound. By simply looking better and offering more cars, it accomplishes with a modicum of style its goal as a straightforward sequel. **GR**



TOIKYO XTREME 2

BY MIKE HOBBS



Yu Suzuki's most ambitious racing game to date has it all with perfect physics, perfect sound, and the best racing graphics on DC



Passion is a word that fairly well describes Ferrari. There is passion in their hand-fettled rolling sculptures of aluminum, steel, and carbon fiber, and there is great passion in the customers who part with the scandalous wads of money for the privilege of driving Maranello's finest. Luckily for us, one of those smitten by the allure of Ferrari is Yu Suzuki, and when his game design talent is combined with red-blooded Italian passion, the result is a truly inspired undertaking.

Ferrari F355 first reared its head in arcades in the form of a groundbreaking three-screen simulator, which featured a dedicated Naomi board driving each high-resolution screen. Not a game for the faint of heart, F355 taught true driving skill, and required a level of finesse completely beyond the typical arcade game, even with the various driving assists turned on.

What we will get at home on Dreamcast is similarly undiluted, and it will re-create the arcade experience to its

core. Basically looking exactly like the center screen of the wide-view original, F355 is the best-looking Dreamcast racer yet, easily trouncing Sega GT in the realism stakes. The frame rate is a constant 60, and the look of the courses, sky, and roadside scenery is simply unmatched. Same goes for the amazing car models, which approach Ridge Racer V in detail.

But it is the play of Ferrari F355 that will earn the game a hallowed place in the pantheon of DC racers. Though our preview version was lacking the full-on Professional setting, which turns off all driving assists like ABS, traction control, and speed control, the level of physics modeling made each race a thrilling lesson in true-to-life car control. The addictiveness of trying to put together a perfect lap was immense, and there is no question that this game has the most thoroughly resolved physics engine ever attempted on console.

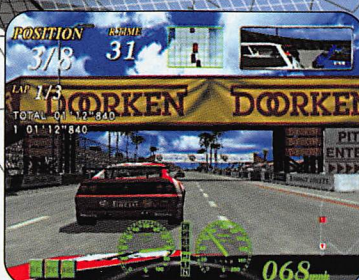
Yu Suzuki's first racer since Daytona is looking very special indeed, and if it weren't for that pesky Ridge Racer V, it could claim the top console racer title. It may yet. **GR**

FERRARI F355

BY MIKE HOBBS



8 cylinder
Max. power output at 8250 rpm 375 bhp
Top Speed : 183 MPH
0-60 : 4.6 seconds
0-1/4 mile : 13 seconds
0-1 mile : 31.8 seconds





JET GRIND RADIO

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Tune in to Jet Grind Radio and experience the new face of polygonal action in a game like no other

If after seeing this game for the first time you do not have an immediate, undying need to purchase a Dreamcast, then your next stop should be the nearest mortuary. Get your box ready my frigid friend, because your soul has already left the building. If you want to save that soul, here's a good place to begin your road to recovery—Jet Grind Radio. As dedicated to old-school gaming as I am, I'm also the first in line when innovation moves in the proper direction—forward. And in terms of the betterment of the gaming experience (again brought to you by the fine folks at Sega), brimming with the convergence of pop culture, simplistic yet fulfilling gameplay, graphical innovation, and deep musical overtones, Jet Grind Radio puts the “F” in freaky-deeky fun.

This smorgasbord for the eyes takes place in and around a secret city in Asia where the government is attempting to curtail the creative expression of your gang, the Rudy's. Wearing Overdrive Magnetic-Motor Skates and fueled by the ultra-hip Jet Grind Radio Program—a pirate radio station manned by the colorful Professor P—the Rudy's express themselves through graffiti art. The Jet Grind Radio program keeps them unified and inspired to fight for their rights of expression, but a special police task force funded by, what else, a huge financial conglomerate has other ideas. In each gigantic city landscape, your mission is to tag the specified areas in the time allotted and then get the heck out before being captured. Tagging sometimes involves a simple flick of the trigger; other times, by manipulating the analog stick as prompted, you'll need to complete whole murals before moving on. As the areas become more complex, just get-

ting to the tag spots becomes a formidable task, as you must jump, grind and shred every inch of the city with great precision. Powerlines, rails, fences, air ducts—if you can see it, you can grind it. The real test, however, begins once the cops come on the scene. They hit you with everything from riot squads to missile-firing helicopters to ground spikes, so once they show, you better haul ass.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 124



After a mediocre outing on the SNES followed by a horrific PS debut, *Spawn* finally gets his day in the moon on Dreamcast

Combining the play mechanics of *Power Stone* and your friendly local frag-fest, with added depth and one of the greatest comic-book universes of our time, Capcom's *Spawn: In the Demon's Hand* represents the future of single-player and multiplayer arena fighting. It also stands as one of only a handful of vs.-style games worth playing on the net. Up to four players can attend the festivities, which include a host of Arcade and Team Battles. You and a CPU or living partner can partake in a succession of two-on-two wars, while in Battle Royal you can go head-to-head with up to three opponents, be they live or CPU. Initially the roster includes Tiffany, Sam, Twitch, Jessica, Tremor, Cogliostro, Grace, Brimstone, Redeemer, Spawn, Clown, and Sam, each with weapons and characteristics expunged directly from the world of *Spawn*. With an additional 24 characters to open up, if nothing else, this game is a dream come true for *Spawn* fans, of which I am a card-carrying member.

The arenas—a hellish assortment of vast expanses, linked by numerous hatchways—include an array of fittingly dank surroundings from New York and its festering sewers to forest graveyards, ice caverns, burn-

ing pits of fire, smelters, and any other God-forsaken hell hole you can think of. And, of course, each is awash in true Capcom splendor, emitting the detail of the original *Power Stone* together with the grit of McFarlane's ever-burgeoning universe. Silky smooth frame rates, breakable containers, and plenty of interactive elements, not to mention vertical layers, abound. The game's as easy on the eyes as it is a total gas to play. The play mechanics are of the simple-to-grasp but difficult-to-master variety, with two attack buttons—one to jump, and one to switch weapons. Taking into account each character's attributes, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to grasp the game's almost unfathomable depth. From Clown's chainsaw arm—which he will gladly bury into the nearest torso—to Tiffany's razor-sharp blade, this is a battle of not only brawn, but speed and dexterity.

No one does fighting like Capcom, and *Spawn* registers as their best polygonal effort to date, in my book. It combines some of the greatest American character designs in decades with a robust engine, perfect control and has diversity to burn, literally. **GR**



SPAWN IN THE DEMON'S HAND BY DAVE HALVERSON





SPYRO: YEAR OF THE DRAGON

BY BRADY FIECHTER

There's been this question on my mind since the first time I played the wonderful Spyro the Dragon, and now that I've had a chance to play Spyro: Year of the Dragon, I'm wondering even more: Just how do these guys at Insomniac manage to craft such an endearingly entertaining series, with each game more ambitious than the last?

I expected the answer to come shrouded in ambiguity, a secret as impenetrable as the PlayStation 2 work being forged in the shadows of the Insomniac offices. But what I got instead needed little explanation: "It's a total team effort," says Caroline Trujillo, Spyro level designer. "It's not like, only the designers do design and only the artists do art. Everybody contributes, helps everybody else. And I think it really shows [in Spyro 3]."

"The nice thing about Insomniac is that it has always been a collaborative effort," adds Ted Price, Insomniac president. "What these guys do is get a programmer, a level builder and an animator together to talk about each of these levels. Tons of ideas come out, and then it's Brian's and Caroline's job to bring everything together

and create a coherent level design. And as a result, since we have more people this time and we have a lot more input, these levels are a lot more varied than previous games. And there are just a lot more wacky things going on."

Not only is there more going on in the environments, underpinned by the Spyro-trademark vibrant color schemes and whimsical visual flourishes, but there's just more to do: more characters to play (four secondary critters, each with its own unique tasks and levels), more levels to explore (37), more tasks to perform (Spyro can drive vehicles, like a





submarine and boat). "It's not just the number of levels that has been increased," Trujillo points out, "but within those levels you have at least two or three mini-games. So it's gigantic."

The natural learning process that comes with successive projects has also played a big part in elevating Spyro: Year of the Dragon. "We've learned a lot about how to make the mini-games fun," explains Brian Allgeier, level designer. "And we've learned about better character control, which shows up when you play the different characters in the game. We also learned how to really take a production cycle and make it more efficient so we could cram a lot more in. The levels are a lot bigger than they ever were... 150 to 200 percent larger. The artists have gotten faster and the tools have gotten more robust. So everything has worked together to create a game that is just a lot bigger."

And hopefully a lot more difficult. For all its accomplishments, Spyro (2): Ripto's Rage was a bit too easy, a problem not unnoticed by the design team. "The first game was so difficult, and Spyro 2 was so easy," admits Trujillo. "So what we've done is Active Tuning. Which an example would be if I'm playing a boss and he's kicking my butt and I've played him 20 times, and he's killed me each time, and I've been there like 45 minutes, eventually the AI of that level will start tuning itself down. It'll start giving me more fodder or the boss will start slowing down, or he won't hit me as far as he normally would. So it'll start adding these components that will make it a little easier. We're also trying to create difficult setups along the primary path, yet have those actually tuned also."

Now back to that question: What *does* it take to make an indelible series like Spyro? Maybe it's more than teamwork. Maybe the secret to making fun games is having fun in the process. Like stamping your business card with "Chief Rubber Donkey Spanker" (that's Allgeier's) and "Employee #17" (that's Trujillo's). **GR**



3: year of the dragon (spyro 3: year of the dragon)

VALKYRIE PROFILE

BY MIKE HOBBS



Enix's *Valkyrie Profile* gives us something we've not seen much of since the days of *Link's Adventure* on NES: a 2D, side-scrolling RPG. Apart from the overworld map and the backgrounds during the battle scenes, this game is presented entirely in 2D, from the dungeon exploration to the town encounters. In a world high on polygons, it's something of a comfort to still see animated sprites and parallax scrolling, at least when they're accomplished with the type of visual flair on display here. Thank developers Tri-Ace, who, in collaboration with Links, showed a similar level of graphical aplomb with *Star Ocean*, their previous effort for Enix. In contrast, however, this game takes a rather more unique approach to the typical Japanese RPG.

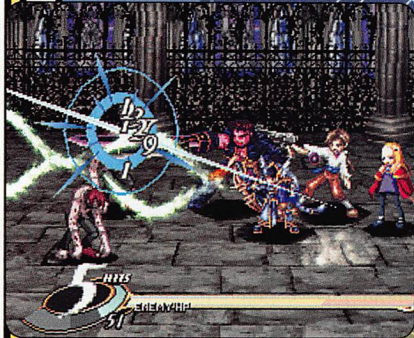
Using Norse mythology as a thematic springboard of sorts, *Valkyrie Profile* casts you in the role of a Valkyrie, the so-called choosers of the slain. Taking the souls from the bravest of vanquished warriors, Valkyries are responsible for supplying Odin with troops for the oncoming battle of Ragnarok—the end of the world in Norse mythology. Using this concept as a broad outline, *Valkyrie Profile* creates a clever four-party structure and highly appealing combat system, but, as we'll come to learn, it appears to be at the expense of world exploration and any

significant character interaction.

Valkyrie Profile follows a very strict formula, and the main thrust of the gameplay is centered around the acquisition of new warriors, or Einherejar, who must be trained in combat so that they may properly serve Odin. During play, the various characters earn hero points, which are then distributed by the player through many different attributes, increasing their strength and various traits, which will prove useful in the battle of Ragnarok.

Acquiring these characters is easy: you simply watch little story events unfold, wherein some unfortunate souls will meet their demise, allowing them to join you in battle. There's generally a lot of drama in these scenes, and they're all good to look at with the game's great character design and 2D backdrops, but you don't really have anything to do with them as a player, enjoying them as a spectator only. This means too that there is very little to explore in the game, the overworld map serving more as a transit system between these story events and the dungeons.

Indeed, about the only time one is really playing *Valkyrie Profile* is when dungeons are being explored and characters built up, but thank-



fully, this is where the game comes alive. First off, there's the general quality of the 2D dungeon graphics, replete with parallax scrolling and even faint wisps of FMV animation. But what really puts the cat among the pigeons is the battle system. With up to four members to your party, each character is controlled by his or her own button on the PS pad, and by executing multiple button presses with astute timing, fantastic combination attacks can be performed on enemies. And when the number of unblocked hits reaches a critical level, exciting "Purify Weird Soul" attacks can be unleashed, and the required battle scene flash comes on strong. It's a very appealing and addictive system, and it certainly elevates the rest of the game, which, quite frankly, doesn't offer a whole lot of gameplay apart from the various character management elements.

This slightly unconventional RPG has a lot going for it nonetheless. Its look is original and very well done, offering something truly alternative with its 2D gameplay

and imagery, and it also boasts a wonderful soundtrack. I won't pass judgement on the voice acting until we receive a final, two-disc version of the game (this preview is based on the entirety of the first disc only), but as it currently stands, it could use a little work, being flat and improperly intoned throughout. However, the battle cries are quite a lot less annoying than those found in Star Ocean's battle scenes, so that's at least a good start.

There are a lot of RPGs coming out this summer, but by virtue of its look and battle system, Valkyrie Profile should have little trouble standing out. If the voices come along and the second disc holds a few surprises, Enix's enviable reputation for quality will soldier on. **GR**





A magical world. A mysterious girl. An epic quest. The Sega CD classic returns better than ever in Lunar 2

Way back in 1995, the video game world was in a state of flux. The days of 16-bit were coming to an end, and upstart companies with their polygon graphics were becoming the rage. But, amidst the chaos, the wondrous light of RPGs was glowing more vibrantly than ever, and one of the brightest lights of all burned on the Sega CD. A light called Lunar: Eternal Blue.

As good as the first Lunar was, the sequel surpassed the original in every way, with an enhanced interface, amazing graphics, an epic story and some of the most memorable characters ever created. Sadly, Eternal Blue didn't receive the audience it truly deserved due to the Sega CD's limited popularity, but now, half a decade later, gamers everywhere will get to bask in the warm glow of the PlayStation remake, Lunar

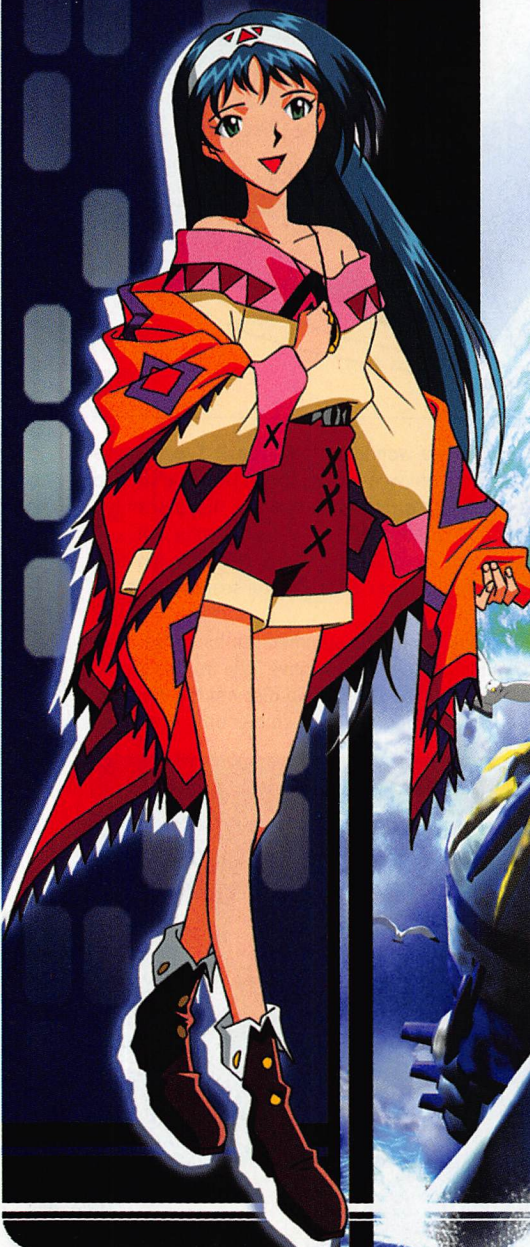
2: Eternal Blue Complete.

Taking place 1000 years after Silver Star Story Complete, Eternal Blue takes players back to the magical world of Lunar where a dark force is threatening the land. Hiro is a young man with an unquenchable thirst for adventure, and when he meets up with a beautiful and mysterious girl named Lucia who claims to be on a mission to stop the darkness, he finds himself on a quest of a lifetime. As Hiro and Lucia travel the world over, they encounter endless challenges and a wonderful cast of characters, plus the requisite RPG goodness like dozens of spells and weapons and big nasty boss creatures to defeat.

Naturally, almost everything has been enhanced over the Sega CD game. While 60 percent of the audio will be reused from the old version, the rest is being re-recorded from the

LUNAR 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



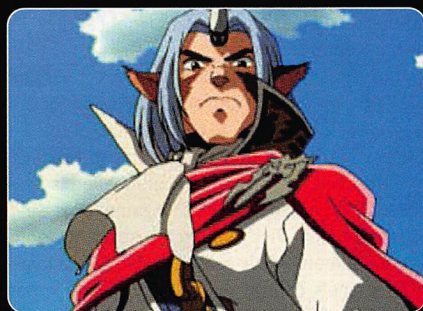


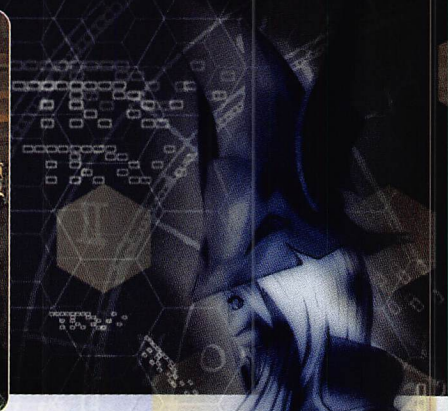
ground up. The hand-drawn graphics are more colorful and beautiful than ever, the music is great, and the game's numerous anime cutscenes are gorgeous. Working Designs has even improved the resolution over the Japanese version of the game—although there's still some graininess—and also plans to add extra voices.

Fans of the Sega CD version will be pleased to know that many of the game's best aspects, such as the story and much of the writing, are being retained from the original, so players can still chuckle at lines like Lord Leo's reference to *The Fugitive*. Unlike *Silver Star Story Complete*, the plot isn't being rewritten, but a

few tweaks have been made here and there. Additionally, the unpopular features, like the pay-per-save and manual magic upgrading, have been removed, and some of the more controversial dialogue is gone—no Bill Clinton references this time.

For longtime *Lunar* fans and newcomers alike, *Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete* is shaping up to be another fantastic RPG experience. Great storytelling backed by brilliant visuals and Working Designs' top-notch writing is a sure formula for a must-have epic. **GR**





FINAL FANTASY IX

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Returning to a more traditional design style, Square crafts a world of immense beauty and scope



Final Fantasy VII and VIII were wondrous achievements in visual artistry, yet the magic swirling in such Square RPGs as Chrono Cross, Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy VIII was dissolved in the cold worlds of anachronistic technology and antiseptic landscapes. With Final Fantasy IX, the visual style recaptures the warmth and fantasy of an ancient civilization, where clunky airships lumber over the grand castles and majestic cobblestone villages below.

While much has changed in this breathlessly ambitious game since Final Fantasy VIII, familiar Final Fantasy themes are

being blended

with new and exciting strokes from such master craftsmen as long-standing producer Hironobu Sakaguchi, and character designer Yoshitaka Amano, who departed the series after Final Fantasy VI. Composing the music and hopefully returning to the fuller, more ethereal pieces of Final Fantasy VI is series-veteran Nobuo Uematsu.

Leading the cast of eight primary characters is Zidane Tribal, a young boy with an uncontrollable passion for the ladies and a propensity for theft. In the tradition of typical RPG story telling, his past is full of great mysteries and revelations, which will, of course, be unravelled as he meets friends and foes throughout the game. It is said that a character named Vivi Ornitier, a seven-year-old magician battling demons of his own, will also play a large role in the game's central events. These and other characters return to the design style of classic RPGs, dominated by exaggerated details and chunky, deformed proportions.

Existing on a network of floating islands, separated by four distinct ruling nations, Final Fantasy IX's world is a tremendous expanse. Its inhabitants and their societal conditions vary greatly from land to land: there are metropolis environments of great wealth to countryside villages where people lead simple lives.

Interaction in this dense world follows a more traditional path, where you'll meet up with characters of

• continued on page 124



DINO CRISIS 2

BY MIKE HOBBS

Capcom has turned the tables with Dino Crisis 2, waving goodbye to the real-time backdrops that helped define the original

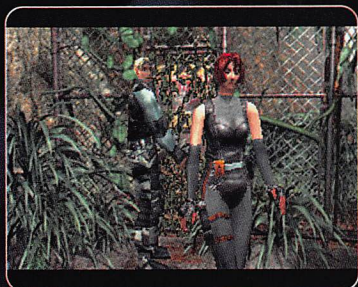
I'll be honest: I could care less about zombies. Of course, I love the Resident Evil games, but aesthetically and conceptually, the inclusion of zombies does nothing for me. Which is one of the reasons I loved the original Dino Crisis so much. It had the feel of Resident Evil, along with absolutely brilliant puzzles, but it added the heightened lethality and speed of menacing dinosaurs. Even better, the subtle, real-time backdrops added a good deal to the experience, creating an environment that was less detailed yet that much more dynamic.

With Dino Crisis 2, Capcom has taken what some would consider a technological step backwards, replacing the original game's polygonal backdrops with prerendered ones. I was initially disappointed because I thought the real-time worked so well for the first game, but stylistically, I can't complain about what Capcom is going for here. In stark contrast to the sterility of the original, there is a lushness here that could not be achieved in real time on the PS, and if the rest of the game

looks as good as these preview areas, I reckon I won't miss the real-time backdrops at all. And of course there is the added benefit of having more polygons to go around for the characters and dinosaurs, making them more detailed than ever.

There is one thing that must return from the first game, however, and it's the great puzzles that defined Dino Crisis' Resident Evil-bred gameplay. Unfortunately, there just isn't enough here to determine whether this is going to be the case. No, this preview version is all about showcasing the type of action we can expect, with endless hordes of marauding raptors leaping out from every corner. While this certainly bodes well for Dino Crisis' action content, it doesn't give much of an indication as to the eventual depth and quality of the experience.

Even so, Capcom always seems to deliver with each new Resident Evil release, and there's no reason to believe that Dino Crisis 2 will be anything less than the equal of the first game – and by all rights, should be a measure better. **GR**



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

BY TOM STRATTON



Back once again in an effort to recapture the flair and appeal of the "golden" year, 007 is ready to wow consumers with *The World Is Not Enough*. Being developed for both the PlayStation and the N64, each game will follow a similar outline but feature unique level designs to set them apart. It is still uncertain if the PS version will have any multiplayer options or just dedicate the game engine to a satisfying one-player experience.

Both games have a very distinguished look to them, pushing consistent frame rates with rich, detailed textures—extremely valued components to the FPS crowd. Objects are easy to identify no matter how inconspicuous and the draw-in has been pushed back to create a true sense of depth.

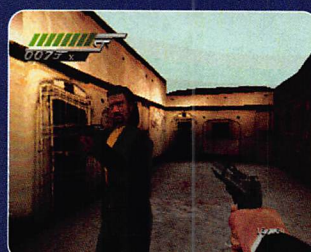
During a quick stint with the N64 version, what first stood out was a series of sudden real-time cut sequences triggered by certain situations. Whether it was after completing an objective or passing through a particu-

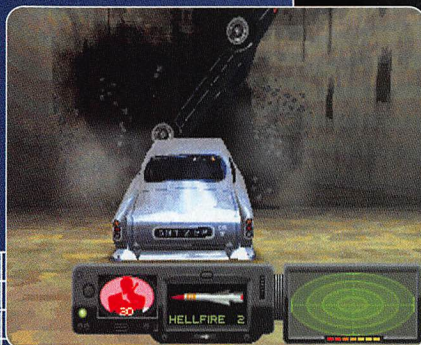
lar door, these tied in the surrounding action very well and built more tension and excitement.

On the PS version, we immediately noticed the great use of architecture in creating striking locales. Objects that only serve as eye candy really set it above other FPS games on the PS. It seemed a bit earlier than the N64 version, but still memorable on its own merits.

As far as the audio, both use convincing sound-alikes to speak for the different characters and,

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 124





007
BOND RACING
BY TOM STRATTON

The name 007 Bond Racing may be a bit deceiving and sell this game short. True, the game has you driving an assortment of tricked-out Bond cars with some sort of time limit attached, but it is not the traditional racing game where you are striving for the pole position. Instead, Bond Racing is a mild blend of Driver and Vigilante 8, taking advantage of the nifty gadgets Bond has always had access to.

Don't expect to follow any sort of past or present Bond story either. The designers have borrowed timeless action sequences from all the 007 films and tied them together in an explosive package fully equipped with rescue, destruction and get-away—all convincingly integrated in the game's first training mission.

In the introduction, as you fight your way out of hostile territories, you will be faced with everything from foot guards and tanks to land mines and barricades and even a helicopter. Considering the early state of the game, the graphics engine runs smoothly, and the vehicle models are fleshed out

and choice; our anticipation is definitely growing.

There is a lot of button finessing you will need to adopt, though the reliable handling and clear heads-up display makes quick decision making easy. Picture taking a tight corner after racing through a path riddled with proximity bombs, only to roll up on a tank. Thanks to sensible play mechanics, you will be able to obliterate the tank without missing a beat, or taking a beating.

Because the training mission was the only level playable, it is tough to say how unique an experience the game will provide, but we do know that all the levels have Bond taking care of business inside a car and not in a boat or even a motorcycle (sequel anyone?). Though we have been told the game will push the player to negotiate a number of stimulating circumstances to dispel redundancy.

You can bet we'll bring you the full itinerary of features in the next few months. It already seems obvious that the Bond license will be just as hot outside the FPS genre. **GR**

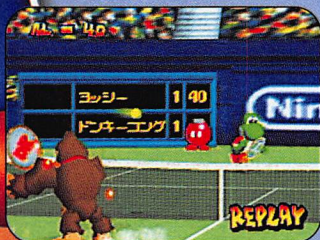




When Nintendo released the NES in New York during the autumn of 1985, one of the launch titles and the only sports game available for the system was simply titled Tennis. Tennis was essentially Pong, only with a vertical playfield and human characters. The referee, sitting high atop his 8-bit chair, was Mario, his first of what would be many cameo roles in Nintendo's games.

Fifteen years later, Nintendo is releasing Mario Tennis for Nintendo 64 and lo-and-behold, there's my old friend, except now he's perched upon a nice, new, fancy 64-bit chair. As I took the preview copy through its paces, playing the five different one-player games against a variety of CPU opponents, it was instantly apparent that, as they did with Mario Golf, Camelot has crafted an outstanding Tennis game for Nintendo that is teeming with personality. The game is easy to pick up and start playing immediately and includes 16 characters such as Boo, Wario, Bowser, Yoshi, and Daisy, as well as at least one new character, Waluigi—a lanky, evil version of Luigi. Lending to the overall appeal of the game, each player even has a Monica Seles-type of grunt when hitting, along with cute little parody-style animations. The characters are classified in one of five types: Tricky (Paratroopa), Power (DK), Speed (Baby Mario), Technique (Peach), and All-Around (Mario).

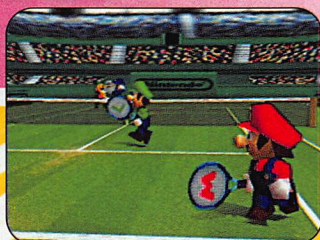
One of Mario Tennis' greatest strengths lies in the excellent multiplayer matches—especially four-player duel. The frenzy of moving up and down and side-to-side to return each hit, and frantically volleying up close at the net, having to tell your partner "I'm up," or "I'm left," is unmatched. **GR**



MARIO TENNIS

BY MICHAEL PUCCINI

Why stop at Mario Golf? Nintendo digs back into its magical bag of characters for yet another endearing sports game



BANJO-TOOIE

BY MICHAEL PUCCINI



With its brilliant level design, innovative play mechanics, dozens of puzzles and mini-games, and humorous overtones, Banjo-Kazooie was a trend-setting platformer. Banjo-Tooie seems to be picking up right where the first game left off but with new advancements, odd discrepancies, and unsolved mysteries.

Banjo-Tooie will up the ante on the gameplay front with the ability to separate Kazooie from Banjo and play each separately. Like with Jet Force Gemini, there will be areas where only one or the other can enter. The duo now sports 40 different abilities and, like in B-K, will be able to morph into other forms.

The weapons have also gone through a makeover. Instead of just one kind of egg to fire, there will be a selection of them including a very cool egg that, once initiated, turns into a remote control wind-up pigeon until it hits its target. And what would a Rare game be without an FPS stage. In one area, Banjo takes control of a spaceship, and the viewpoint goes to FPS in order to take aim at targets.

Some of the levels in Kazooie were quite large, and according to Nintendo, the smallest level in Tooie is said to be larger than the largest level in Kazooie—gesundheit!

And you won't believe this unfortunate turn of events, but the "Waassuup!" catch phrase has made its way into an A-list platformer; a new character named King Jingaling says it when he meets Banjo. He needs to die.



Moving on, this brings me to the story and the discrepancies. For the avid B-K player, you'll remember that Gruntilda kept making jokes about her sister, and that the sister, Brentilda, was in the game handing out tips. Now, Gruntilda returns but with two new sisters. Another oddity is that the friendly mole, Bottles, is now dead, but we don't know how he died (although Gruntilda does look a bit fatter).

As for the unsolved mysteries: the two large eggs and the large frozen key from the first game still remain shrouded in secrecy. If you recall, at the end of B-K, Mumbo shows the secrets and then Banjo asks, "How do we get those?" Mumbo replies, "Mumbo not telling. Find out in Banjo-Tooie." **GR**





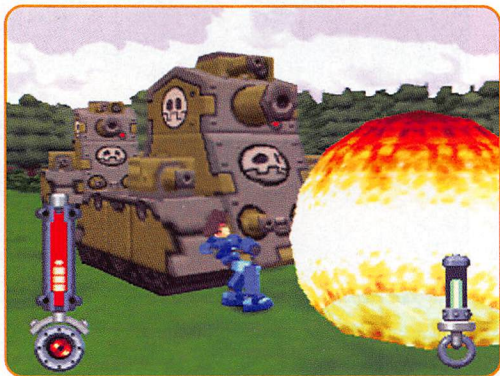
MEGA MAN 64

preview by c. hoffman • dev/pub: capcom • avail: november



At long last Mega Man is coming to the Nintendo 64. That's the good news. The somewhat bad news is that Mega Man 64 is little more than a port of the strangely addictive Mega Man Legends that appeared on PlayStation nearly two years ago. That it's not an

all-new title is a bit disappointing,



but 3D platformer fans who've never experienced Legends should find a lot to like here. In this adventure, players take on the role of a new character, Mega Man Volnutt, a "digger" who excavates precious crystals and spends a lot of time exploring murky underground ruins and blowing nasty guard robots, called Reaverbots, to scrap. Mega Man also gets caught up battling the Bonne family—Tiesel, Tron and baby Bon—a group of pirates who are trying to steal the legendary Mother Lode treasure. Although the look and feel are nothing like the old Mega Man games, Mega Man does acquire numerous weapons and upgrades. Additionally, the game has many RPG elements—characters to talk to, upgrades to buy, mini-games and a multitude of sub-quests—to add depth. At this point, the game makes little use of the N64's strengths (models and textures are identical to PS) but it's all rather fun, despite its kiddie leanings. **GR**

QUAKE III

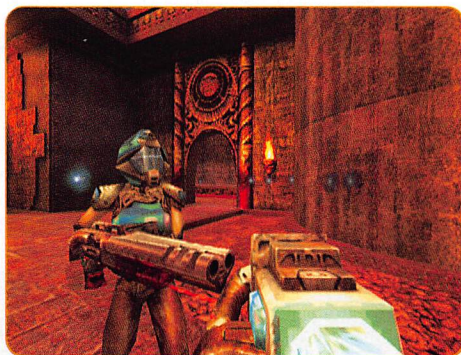
preview by b. fiechter • dev: raster/id • pub: activision • avail: september



After an unexpectedly impressive online demonstration of NFL2K1 and NBA2K1, our excitement for Quake III has intensified. The game has made the visual trip from PC to Dreamcast virtually unscathed, so the likelihood for success would now

seem to rest entirely on Internet capabilities and the game's playability with a DC controller. Can one of the most respected online PC games ever survive in a console world?

GR



R.C. REVENGE

preview by c. hoffman • dev: acclaim cheltenham • pub: acclaim • avail: august



It may be a sequel of sorts to last year's Re-Volt, but R.C. Revenge is an all-new game from the ground up. This kart-style racer features 20 courses spread throughout movie-set-themed areas like Jungle World, AKLM Studios and Monster World, with giant environments where you

have to deal with real-world obstacles like enormous tables and dangerous milk spills. Over 10 vehicles (including hidden ones) are selectable, each with car and boat forms for when the action shifts from the track to the sea. Numerous weapons like flame schlongs and lightning bolts are strewn throughout the tracks, and a versus mode and time trials will challenge players even if they win the championship trophy. **GR**



MEGA MAN LEGENDS 2

preview by c. hoffman • dev/pub: capcom • avail: october



If you liked the 3D adventuring of 1998's Mega Man Legends, you'll be pleased to know that Capcom is sticking to the same formula for the sequel. True to form, Mega Man Legends 2 is packed to the hilt with exploration, RPG elements and lots of shooting, but this time around the game is much bigger, the graphics are better, and there's a greater attention to story than before. The most notable enhancement is that unlike in the original, the Flutter (Mega Man's ship) is fully functional, and you can use it to fly to various lands instead of being stranded in the same locale the whole game. This makes for much more varied environments, with snowstorms, organic temples, underwater areas and those familiar green fields and underground caverns to battle through. The textures have been notably improved over MML, giving a more lifelike feel to the buildings and characters while retaining the same anime style. In fact, the visuals in many ways resemble the fantasy worlds from Breath of Fire IV (not surprising since they share the same designer). Like in the last game, the legendary "mother lode" treasure plays an integral part of the plot, but this time the story also delves into the characters' pasts as Mega Man tries to find out what happened to Roll's parents (in between his firepower-packed explorations, that is). Fans of the original will be sure to enjoy the return of the meddlesome Bonne family, and in a nice nod to continuity, Glyde (from The Misadventures of Tron Bonne) shows up too. MML2 looks to surpass the first in every way. **GR**



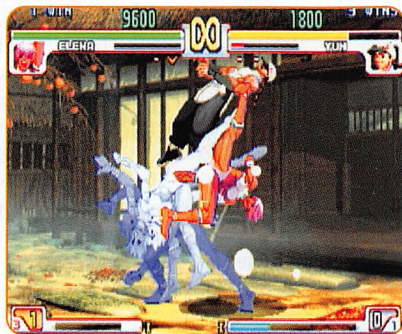


STREET FIGHTER III

preview by s. akinnuso • dev/pub: capcom • avail: tha

Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike on the Dreamcast is an almost pixel for pixel translation of an arcade game that many consider the true successor to the Street Fighter name. Boasting beautifully drawn backdrops and the most animation ever in a 2D fighter, Street Fighter: 3rd Strike's visual presence is unmatched in the realm of 2D fighting. Right off the bat, Capcom did a complete overhaul of the presentation. Ditching the standard keyboard sound for a trip-hop drum and bass rhythm, 3rd Strike is all about attitude, and the characters stink of it. The parrying system (tap forward at contact to stop a move then counter) seems faster and easier, although the actual gameplay seems to have slowed down a tad to compensate for the unbelievable animations. Remy, Chun-Li, Q, Twelve, and Makoto round out the new characters, all translating perfectly to your system, but the biggest reason to get this title is for the Dreamcast-only options that Capcom tossed in.

Expect new Capcom features to go along with the standard Arcade mode and two-player modes when this game hits Stateside. The System Direction Mode allows users to configure the Parry Data information, which doesn't seem like a lot, but can make all the difference in the flow of this very scientific fighting game. Take out air blocks? Air Parrying? How long should there be contact before you can counter? Capcom, at least in the Japanese version, has made every element as customizable as possible, effectively making this the most innovative Capcom fighter yet. **GR**



METROPOLIS S.R.

preview by m. hobbs • dev: bizarre creations • pub: sega • avail: fall

One of the first games announced for the U.S. Dreamcast, Metropolis Street Racer is obviously getting the ace treatment from Bizarre Creations. As demonstrated with its original Formula One game on PlayStation, and more recently with Fur Fighters, this is a developer with a firm grasp on playability and graphics, and Metropolis Street Racer looks to continue this tradition with style. Painstakingly modeled environments from the likes of London, San Francisco, and Tokyo should provide the perfect backdrop for some blistering street racing, and a wealth of licensed cars will add that final level of verisimilitude that is almost required in the age of Gran Turismo. Brief hands-on play at this year's E3 proved rewarding as the physics seemed to be pretty well in order, but we'll have to spend some quality time with it before we can draw any more conclusions. **GR**



SILENT SCOPE

preview by m. hobbs • dev/pub: konami • avail: fall

Video game players are a sadistic lot. But who can deny the pleasure of sniping in a game like Perfect Dark or GoldenEye, relishing in the sick joy of picking off some unsuspecting target quietly going about his or her evil business? Konami is certainly well aware of this twisted pleasure, which forms the basis of Silent Scope, an arcade original that will be coming to both Dreamcast and PlayStation 2. This is good news, as it's the best on-rails shooter I've played since The House of the Dead 2.

In the delectable arcade version, an actual LCD video screen perched atop your gun served as a sniper sight, allowing you to peer in for the kill shot while pulling back to look at the big picture directly ahead on the full-size screen. Naturally, this entertaining feature would have been impractical for the home version, but hands-on play has shown that the game doesn't suffer much without it and can work very well in a much simpler form. In both the DC and PS2 versions, the variable zoom sight can be raised and dropped at will, making it very easy to both look at the whole screen while effortlessly zooming in for the kill.

Silent Scope is due to launch with the PS2, with the DC version out at around that same time. Expect both to be very close graphically. **GR**



THE GRINCH

preview by pooch
dev: universal • pub: konami • avail: october

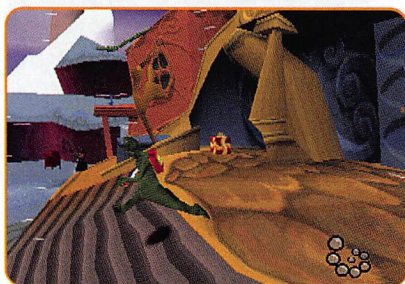
The Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas live action film will be out at the end of this year, but the video game will only loosely follow the movie, because the designers didn't want to make an identical video game version. In a third-person perspective, you'll take control of the Grinch and at times his dog Max, in an effort to ruin Christmas for the Whos via mission-based gameplay. You'll roam through the town of Who-ville and other Who-land environments, smashing gifts and collecting items like the very cool GrinchCopter that allows you to fly. The version we saw was early, so the graphics in these screens will be much improved by release. **GR**



18 WHEELER

preview by m. hobbs
dev/pub: sega • avail: fall

Sega has produced no shortage of funky arcade cabinets. Their latest to find its way to the Dreamcast is 18 Wheeler, a truly curious driving game with a theme that can only be described as original. I had the chance to try the arcade game at this year's E3, and apart from some frightening BJ and the Bear flashbacks, had a good time driving this big rig through several different challenges. Of course, the great gimmick of the gigantic, level steering wheel will be missing from the DC version, but should otherwise prove to be a very faithful translation, for whatever that's worth. **GR**





SNO CROSS

preview by m. hobbs
dev: uds • pub: crave • avail: august



Snowmobile racing is still a rather green genre for the PlayStation. Even so, Crave's Sno Cross doesn't seem so wet behind the ears. Featuring an official Yamaha license and a full spate of that manufacturer's snowmobiles, this alternative PS racer boasts realistic physics and rider animation, along with a cool little track editor for creating original courses. Rather severe fade-in mars the otherwise solid visual presentation, but overall, Sno Cross is shaping up quite nicely. **GR**



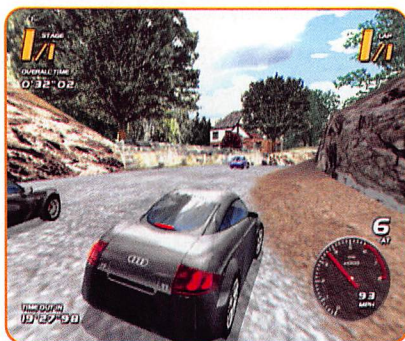
VANISHING POINT

preview by m. hobbs
dev: clockwork games • pub: acclaim • avail: fall



By the developer's own admission, Vanishing Point on Dreamcast has a long way to go. Apparently, the version we have for preview doesn't look like it should (no hi-res textures yet), nor is the control any-

where near where it needs to be. I wonder then why we were even sent this game for preview? Regardless, Vanishing Point has potential, with a stunt mode and a slew of tracks and licensed cars to race. Let's hope it all comes together as promised. **GR**

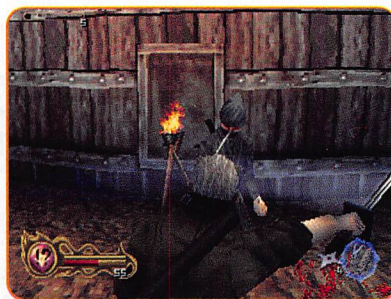


TENCHU 2: B.O.B.

preview by s. akinnuso
dev: acquire • pub: activation • avail: september



Pick one game that was honest competition for Metal Gear, and Tenchu gets the respect. Activision's new prequel, Tenchu 2: Birth of Assassins, shows much promise with 12 even larger, more ambient levels, a noticeable texture increase, new animations, and double the amount of weapons, including newly implemented Ninja Magics. But these are all expected. Activision's biggest surprise is their amazing new mission editor. Player-manipulated options enhance the already vastly improved mission objectives. Construct your own scenarios, from guarding and stealing to silent stalking and assassination. With its impressively replayable mission diversity, Tenchu 2, from what we've played, promises to be the ultimate Ninja game on your PS, like some millennial Shinobi. **GR**



DARK ANGEL

preview by b. fletcher
dev/pub: metro 3D • avail: fall



In the gloomy land of Gothos, inhabitants are dying of an unknown disease that transforms them into monsters. Possessing unusual strengths, a young girl named Anna is somehow immune to the pestilence. While uncovering her past, Anna endeavors to vanquish the malevolent Warlord Yagma, who draws his strength from the vampiric underworld. The game is being designed to balance kinetic gameplay with an emphasis on heavy story telling, in which character interaction is detailed by large amounts of spoken dialogue. As Anna explores the land, events will be directly affected by her actions, unfolding even after a town has been departed. **GR**



FORMULA 1 2000

preview by m. hobbs
dev: studio 33 • pub: midway • avail: fall



It's odd that there are two officially licensed F1 games for PS this year. The already released F1 2000 from Electronics Arts sets the current standard, but Psygnosis' latest from Psygnosis and Studio 33 will likely punt it off the top. Based on our one-track demo, which featured Australia's Melbourne circuit, I can already say that Psygnosis' effort looks better, with a much more appealing color palette and a more solid overall appearance. The physics were also more enjoyable, with a better sensation of cornering and more entertaining car behavior.

EA's game has a huge head start, but I predict those who wait will be happier with Studio 33's F1 game. **GR**



IN COLD BLOOD

preview by s. akinnuso • dev: revolution/midway
pub: sony • avail: fall



Employing a unique claymation-type look to strengthen its characters, Revolution Software, Midway, and Sony Computer Entertainment plan to deliver the definitive English action-adventure game without the hefty 007 license. Playing a British Agent, In Cold Blood is equal parts action and story, with an impressive Resident Evil-style interface. The game hints of a smart script inspired by both Bond and Solid Snake, so if they clean up a few of the animations, and loosen up the controls a bit, Midway might be onto something significant. **GR**



GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS



GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

DOMESTIC REVIEWS

BALL BREAKERS PS	D-
BUST A GROOVE 2 PS	B
CHRONO CROSS PS	A
DINOSAUR PS	D-
DUCK DODGERS N64	D
ESPN MLS Gamenight PS	B
FUR FIGHTERS DC	A
INCREDIBLE CRISIS PS	B
KOUELKA PS	C-
MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2 DC	A-
MS. PAC-MAN MAZE MAD. PS	B
NGEN RACING PS	B
NAMCO MUSEUM DC	B-
NIGHTMARE CREATURES 2 DC	B-
PARASITE EVE 2 PS	B+
POWER STONE 2 DC	B
RPG MAKER PS	B
SEAMAN DC	B+
SILVER DC	B
SOUTH PARK RALLY DC	C+
TOY STORY 2 DC	B
VIRTUA TENNIS DC	A-
VIRTUAL ON 2 DC	B+
WACKY RACES DC	B
X-MEN: MUTANT ACAD. PS	B-

IMPORT REVIEWS

ALL STAR PRO-WRESTLING PS2	C-
BUCHIKIRE KONGOU PS2	D-
HRESVELGR PS2	D
SAKURA WARS DC	C+
TVDJ PS2	B

HANDHELD REVIEWS

CRYSTALIS GBC	B-
DRAGON WARRIOR 1&2 GBC	A-
WACKY RACES GBC	B
XTREME SPORTS GBC	B+



FUR FIGHTERS

GAME OF THE MONTH



Fur Fighters

developer: bizarre creations
publisher: acclaim

If you own a Dreamcast, this should be your next stop, and if you don't, trust us, you need one and this game.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2

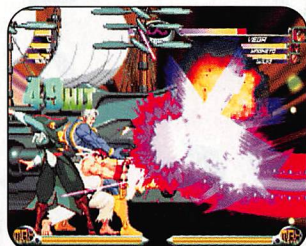
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



and Ryu plus newcomers like Cable, Tron Bonne and Jill Valentine), but that list blossoms into an unprecedented 56 characters once you unlock them via a purchase method. Naturally, every character has loads of special techniques, chaotic aerial raves and devastating super combos.

Furthering the madness is the new 3-on-3 battle system. It was something when you double-teamed an opponent in the original game, but it was merely a drizzle compared to the thunderstorm display of three characters chaining super attacks together. New techniques abound also: though the non-playable helpers are gone, you can summon your partners at any time, plus you can temporarily knock opponents out of the fight with the "snapback" attack. Despite the madness, *MvC2* handles precisely, so you'll have no problem controlling your fights, especially with the redesigned controls that are maximized for the Dreamcast pad.

The visuals are also astounding. Capcom has taken the backgrounds to all new heights by combining 3D and 2D elements into flawless works of art, complete with effects like fog, reflecting water and a clock tower that actually tells the real time. The characters are Capcom's usual amazingly animated sprites, but they're a bit pixilated – one of the game's few flaws. Likewise, the jazzy vocal-filled music is a bit odd. Still, the pieces of the game fall together brilliantly, forming a fantastic display that's highly controllable, spectacular to watch, and unlike any 2D fighter you've ever played. Get ready for a ride. **GR**



■ UNPRECEDENTED 56 CHARACTERS
■ INSANE 3-ON-3 TAG COMBAT

■ FLAWLESS 3D BACKGROUNDS
■ SLIGHTLY PIXILATED CHARACTERS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

PURE FIGHTING BLISS FROM THE MASTERS AT CAPCOM. NOTHING WILL PREPARE YOU FOR THE INSANE ACTION AND VISUALS OF *MVC2*.

A-



They may be all cute 'n fury (well, except for Tweak), but they're pissed off and packin'!

Whether you're in the mood to unload both barrels or partake in an epic-scale adventure of the furry kind, Bizarre Creations has you covered with their latest and greatest title to date, *Fur Fighters*. It's almost hard to describe just how great a game this is, but alas, I will give it my all.

Fur Fighters delivers an engrossing and altogether ingenious gaming experience to versed players longing for the depth of a *Tomb Raider* (and then some) and the visual punch and puzzle elements of a Rare or Miyamoto offering. Speaking of Rare, I can make this real easy by simply stating that this is the game *Donkey Kong 64* promised to be. The art of combining the abilities of different characters, strung out tag-team style amidst huge worlds, has now been perfected. If the Dreamcast contingent doesn't come out for this one, I weep for this dedicated team, which spent years and sweated every last detail.

The premise of *Fur Fighters* is simple: the evil

General Viggo—the feline equivalent of Mike Myers' Doctor Evil—kidnaps the *Fur Fighters*' kids and genetically mutates their spouses to keep them occupied while he takes over the world. Before having it out with Viggo, the *Fur Fighters* must explore six massive theme-based hubs containing a number of super-sized sectors, rescuing their offspring. The kids are hidden well too; often your only clue that one is near comes by listening for their specific cry or whimper. The puzzles and tasks you are immersed in to free them simply cannot be done justice in print. Often linked to a host of brilliant mini-games and crazy treks through all manner of mechanized framework, they range from landing a space shuttle to exploring the inner workings of a super computer or TV set. The level of interactivity within each sprawling area is unparalleled for a gaming universe, as are the graphics—a more clever exposition of polygons you will not find anywhere. In one area in particular within *Dinotopolis* you'll explore an entire modern-day dinosaur household. From the living room to the rumpus room, kitchen, bathroom, kids room, and baby room, you won't believe your eyes (or ears) as you venture inside furniture, explore a massive toy train set, pilot a toy tank and even battle a killer vacuum cleaner. At one point you actually climb inside of a dinosaur's cranium through his ear to tickle his brain and get



FUR FIGHTERS

BY DAVE HALVERSON





launched out of his nose, as he's soaking in the tub, reading the paper. If you get under the paper and look up you can actually read the articles—a level of detail which should be celebrated by every last Dreamcast owner. The boss battles are equally impressive. Spectacles to see and play, they require as much strategy as skill, and always take a good long time to put down.

From a technical standpoint, the visuals will bring you to your knees. The massive, generously detailed and textured environments move smoothly, and no matter how much is going on, the game never skips a beat. The design and architecture are crowning achievements, enveloping you in a world that is, in a word, unforgettable. All the while the spirited soundtrack changes to suit the personality of each Fur Fighter with different instruments popping in every time you switch egos. This game is something special. The deeper you go, the more there is to love. And as long of a game Fur Fighters is, you'll never want it to end.

Fur Fighters is a testament to the best Sega hardware since the Genesis. I could rave on and on about it, but if you're not

convinced by now, I suppose it wouldn't matter. Let me just say that this game will fill you with that special feeling you long to recapture that comes but a few times a year. No true gamer should miss this one. It's true, other reviews have painted a less-than-stellar picture, but taking into account that Acclaim provided each critic with a level select and walk-through (a sad state of affairs if there ever was one) knowing that few would take the 50 or so hours to truly milk the game, this doesn't surprise me. Hence, mine is the last review you'll probably read, but at least you know it comes at the tail end of my squeezing every last drop of goodness out of one of the best action-adventure games of the year. I suppose one could fault Fur Fighters with being too big, but that's the same as calling Jet Force Gemini too long. The way I see it, an A game is an A game no matter how you slice it. **GR**



FUN

FURRY ANIMALS FURRY ANIMALS FURRY ANIMALS FURRY ANIMALS FURRY ANIMALS FURRY ANIMALS FURRY ANIMALS

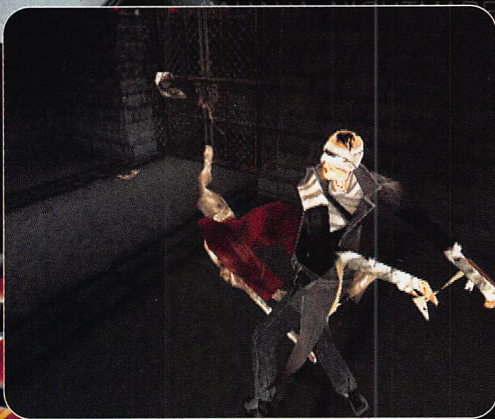
- INGENUOUS LEVEL DESIGN THROUGHOUT
- A WONDERFUL NEW UNIVERSE TO EXPLORE

- CHARACTER DESIGN IS SUPERB
- MUSIC CHANGES WITH EACH CHARACTER - XLAT SOUNDTRACK

REPUBLIC SAYS...

BIZARRE CREATIONS BLESSES THE DREAMCAST WITH ONE OF THE BEST 3D ACTION ADVENTURES EVER CREATED—FROM THE INSPIRED CAST TO THE RICH FULFILLING GAMEPLAY.

A



NIGHTMARE CREATURES 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON

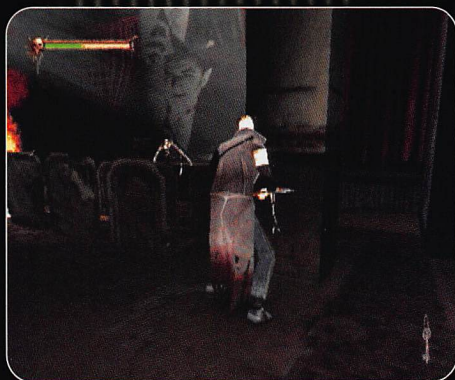
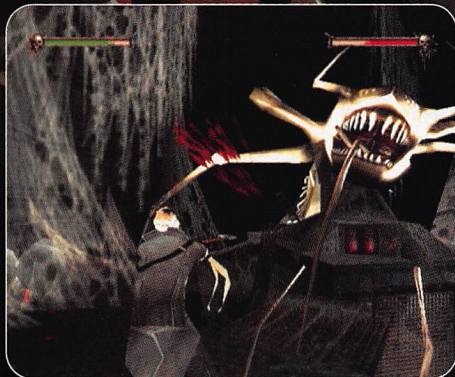
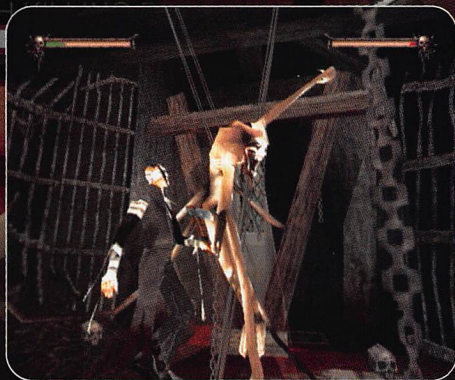
*You can't keep a good creature down...
Kalisto port their latest nightmare onto the willing Dreamcast*

The sheer fact that I am able to play all the way through Nightmare Creatures again is a testament to the game's appeal—should you be in the market for a beat-'em-up with ample doses of blood, gore, and a maniacal heart. As a person who trembles at the thought of anything that even resembles a beat-'em-up, even I am surprised at how much I've enjoyed reviewing this title both for the PlayStation and Dreamcast. But then again, I like dark games, Rob Zombie, and horror in general. Looking past the game's inherent collision issues in which many detailed ornamental objects cause Herbert some minor discomfort, and the somewhat repetitive gameplay associated with

the genre, I am intrigued by the game's sense of dread, the character designs, and the elements that help set it apart from the standard drivel that usually leaks into the category; those elements include a healthy injection of story as Herbert narrates his own horrible charade, mild puzzles, underwater sequences, and the ghoulishly impressive cinemas that link the game's vast areas. Let's face it, not every game can be, or should be, complex. There's still good fun to be had in the form of beating the shit out of slobbering beasts and Marilyn Manson (circa Anti-Christ Superstar) lookalikes.

It's hard to put your finger on exactly what Kalisto set out to achieve





with their second monster mash. It can be argued exactly which genre NMC2 fits in to. I consider it a beat-'em-up with adventure elements, but critically it has suffered much scrutiny as a failed attempt at an adventure game. I suppose what throws most people off is the game's battle mechanism, in which Herbert tethers onto each enemy for an offensive and defensive duel. Herbert can block, push, swipe and chop. The object is to study each enemy's patterns and find the right combos to dismember them quickly, rendering them helpless for your slaughter. Once each ghoul's weaknesses are exposed, it's down to taking as little punishment as possible while forging ahead after Crowley—the object of Herbert's obsession and the reason for his current tattered state. Along the way there are switches to throw, keys and bolt cutters to find (which Herbert uses with realistic animations) and plenty of hidden areas to keep you on your toes while searching for items. The brunt of the game, though, is spent hacking, chopping, slicing,

and lacerating growling, malformed, slithering and just plain evil deities. Sounds like a beat-'em-up to me.

The only question is whether or not this version of the game really belongs on the Dreamcast. Sure it's locked down tight without the jittering polys and clipping that plagued the PS version, but the models and textures (although higher in resolution) are straight PS all the way. While this is the best version of the game, it falls into that strange paradox: it pushes the limits of one platform but doesn't scratch the surface of its latest benefactor. All I can say is that if you only own a Dreamcast and a little mindless adventure/horror sounds good, NMC2 should fill the bill. However, if you own both a PlayStation and a Dreamcast and already have the PS version, have a run through with the old Bleemcast for twenty bucks—and kiss your old PS goodbye. **GR**

■ GREAT CINEMAS AND GORE GALORE
■ CHARACTER DESIGNS TO DIE FOR

■ REPETITION CAN SET IN
■ I NEED METAL IN THE GAME

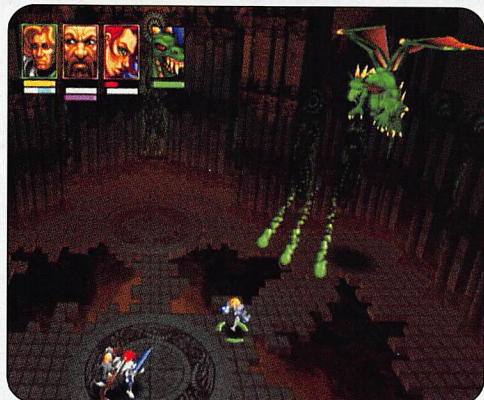
REPUBLIC SAYS...

THE CREATURES ARE STIRRING ONCE AGAIN AND ALTHOUGH THEY ARE LOOKING BETTER THAN EVER, THIS GAME DOESN'T COME CLOSE TO PUSHING ALL OF THE DREAMCAST'S BUTTONS.

B-



The first epic action-RPG for the Dreamcast comes from the annals of PC gaming...but don't let that scare you



Silver is the story of a young knight named David who hails from a small, peaceful providence far detached from the treachery of the evil sorcerer Silver, who, together with his evil siblings, rules the eight islands of Jarrah from his palace high on the blood-isle of Metalon. One fateful day, it behooves the crabby old incubus to kidnap David's wife, setting into motion David's ultimate fate, which isn't merely to rescue his beloved Jennifer, but to save the entire region—the classic framework for a good bit of medieval role-playing.

Although the Dreamcast is enjoying an almost overwhelming lineup of quality software, here's the first true action-RPG for the console, free from the ball and chain of the PC where it debuted last year. Adopting the now-passe technique of which FFXVII was the harbinger—combining prerendered backgrounds with polygonal characters—developers Spiral House do so with

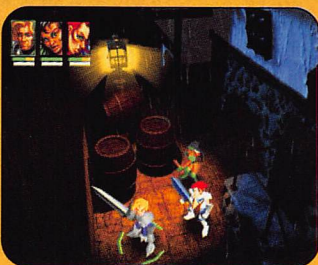
masterful strokes. The scenery, which is laden with animated elements, has all the sparkle and newness that Final Fantasy VII possessed, while enjoying more colors and the benefit of higher resolution. From the wet cobblestone streets of the villages to the serene and often surreal outdoor areas, the picturesque landscapes never fail to satisfy visually, which helps a story that takes a while to unfold but is well worth the telling.

Story plays a huge role in Silver, even though the action in the game is all carried out in real time quite resourcefully. Rather than the usual batting-of-the-sword technique, Silver utilizes a clever system in which, by holding the right trigger, you perform an array of attacks using the analog stick while using the buttons to dodge, use a shield or magic, or call up the game's easy-to-navigate pie menu system to equip, heal, etc. The old hack-and-slash is available too,



SILVER

BY DAVE HALVERSON

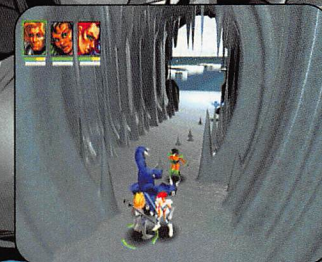
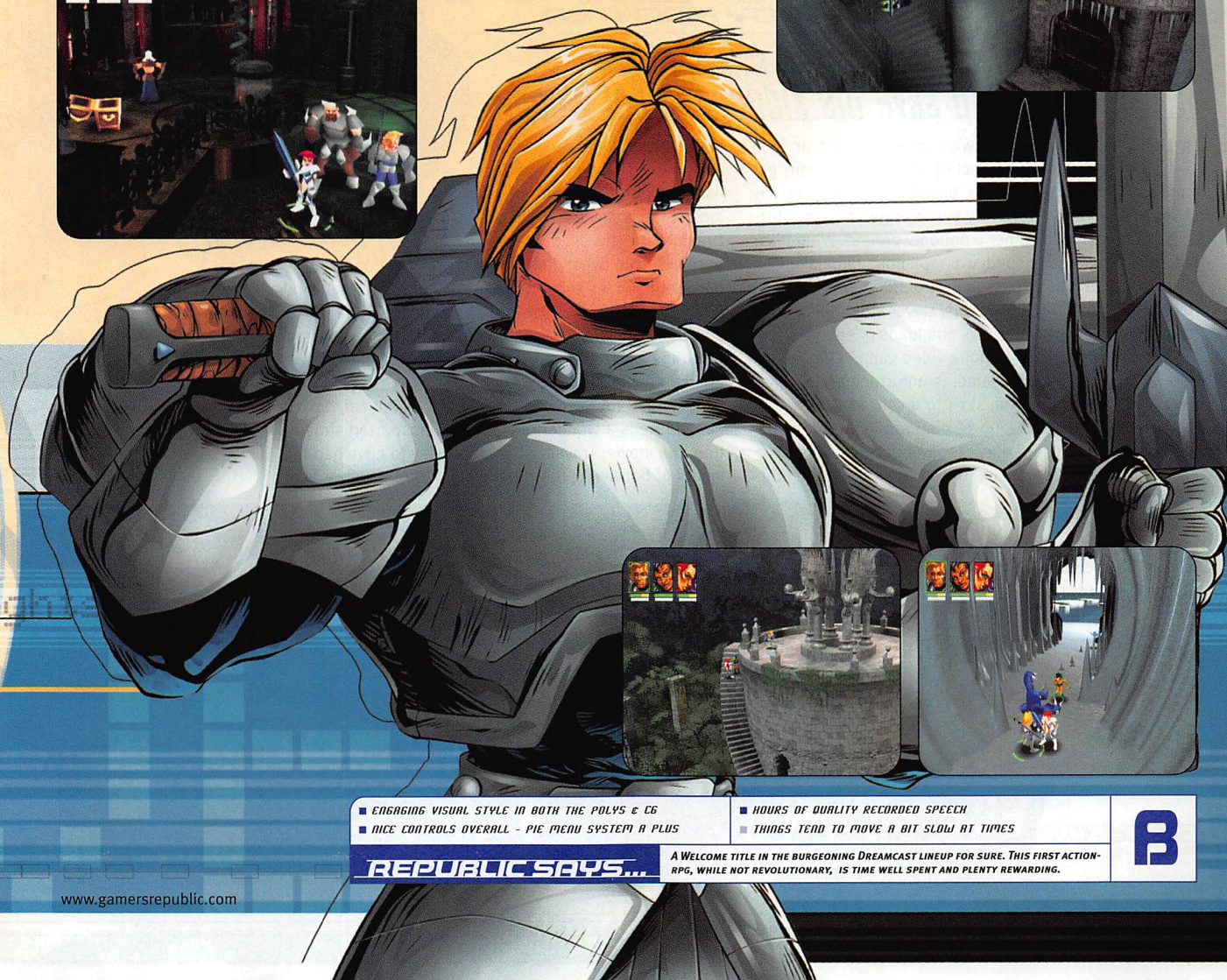




but is mostly for use on smaller, more insignificant enemies when you're in a hurry. The gameplay otherwise is directed by the scenarios, so listening carefully and buying information or the odd item (like a cursed dabloon) whenever possible is key.

Once you've defeated Silver's first minion and obtained your first orb (the glowing spheres on which the ultimate disposal of Silver relies), things become considerably non-linear. Most of your intel derives from the rebel's base camp, where you'll be able to recruit two warriors to assist you on your journey. Pertaining to the hired help, you can control any single character while the CPU does its best to command the other two, so equipping your party correctly can have a direct effect on battles. For instance, if you assign the fire orb to a character you're not controlling, he or she might waste it on the first underling that happens along. Likewise, archers don't fare well with axes, and so on.

Comparing Silver to other games in the genre, what really tips the scales are the character models and animation. Even at their smallest, characters' details are excellent right down to their individual facial features, and everything appears solid and well formed. Arms and legs appear firmly attached to their respective torsos, and polygons rarely, if ever, pop or melt into each other. And since the characters are wee lads—save for the bosses, who often fill a good portion of the screen—everyone moves at a brisk clip. The only wrinkle in this yarn is the inherent brief loading that occurs as you run from screen to screen, and the occasional slow nature of the gameplay; otherwise, fans of the period should be enthralled with this formidable and often breathtaking quest. The story has all the middle-age trappings you yearn for and the game exhibits great polish, with inspired characters, design, completely spoken dialogue, a befitting soundtrack and, most importantly, a reason to dust off that old thinking cap. **GR**



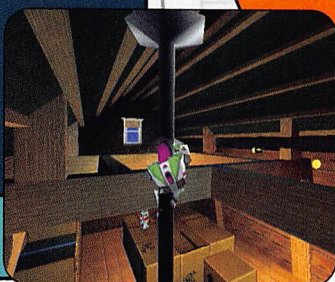
■ ENGAGING VISUAL STYLE IN BOTH THE POLYS & CG
■ NICE CONTROLS OVERALL - PIE MENU SYSTEM A PLUS

■ HOURS OF QUALITY RECORDED SPEECH
■ THINGS TEND TO MOVE A BIT SLOW AT TIMES

REPUBLIC SAYS...

A WELCOME TITLE IN THE BURGEONING DREAMCAST LINEUP FOR SURE. THIS FIRST ACTION-RPG, WHILE NOT REVOLUTIONARY, IS TIME WELL SPENT AND PLENTY REWARDING.

B



TOY STORY 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER

The determined Buzz Lightyear runs, swings, climbs and jumps to save his kidnapped pal Woody

Don't tell me you didn't wipe away a little tear from your eye when unsuspecting Jessie the Cowgirl got carelessly discarded by her once-loving owner in *Toy Story 2*. It's OK—admit it. Any movie as good as *Toy Story 2* is bound to reach higher emotional ground. What Pixar and Disney accomplished was splendid filmmaking, a classic sequel that surpassed its groundbreaking original by blending dazzling CG visuals, clever story telling, rich characters, delightful settings and loads of energy.

Is this movie not perfect for a video game? Of course it is—but *Toy Story 2*, the game, is unfortunately not perfect. But it is big fun from start to finish, an action-platformer that offers the kind of platform-intensive gameplay that's become a rarity in today's game making.

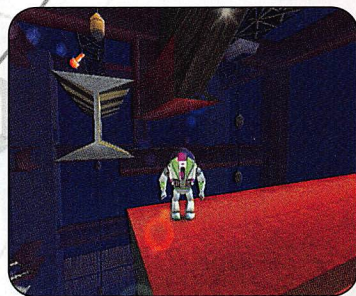
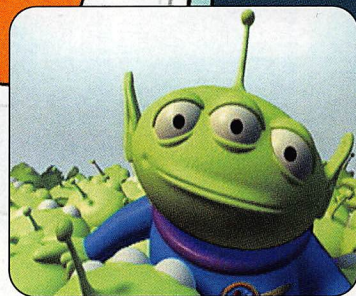
Toy Story 2 creates its universe out of locations inspired by the movie, moving from a house to the backyard to alleys and construction yards to toy stores and apartment build-

ings, eventually arriving at an airport for the climactic battle.

As a straight PlayStation port, the look of the game is very simplistic for Dreamcast—this is probably the laziest port yet—but what it lacks in sophistication it makes up for in creative settings that cast a fun and unique atmosphere. Like in *Toy Commander*, one of the game's charms is the ability to command a tiny toy, exploring a place where everything is gargantuan and open for exploration.

Here that toy is the fearless Buzz Lightyear, Space Ranger. He is a wonderful creation, transported straight from the movie; Traveller's Tales is lucky to have had the luxury of borrowing the Buzz design from the wizards at





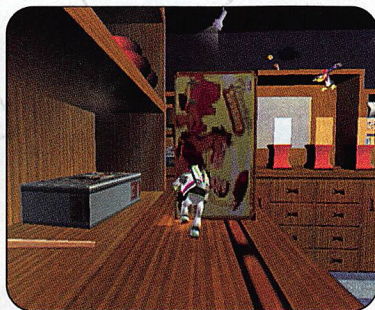
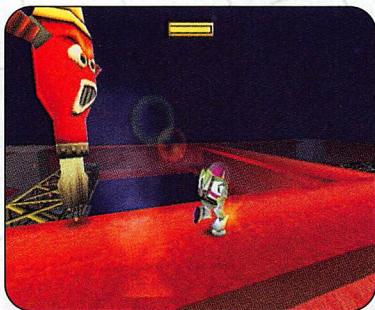
Pixar. Buzz's mission: save Woody from Al, the greedy toy collector who plans to sell Woody to the highest bidder.

As Buzz tracks Woody down, he receives assistance from friends like Mr. Potato Head, Rex, and Hamm, who give him special abilities and hand out Pizza Planet Tokens, which grant access to later levels. Each of the 15 levels harbor five Tokens, rewarded after certain tasks are completed: defeat a boss, collect fifty coins, finish an obstacle course or win a race and you receive a token; finish a task, like returning five sheep to Bo Peep, and

you receive a token.

Whether stomping the enemy, slicing them with a spin attack, or blasting them with a forearm-mounted laser, Buzz's offensive maneuvers bring plenty of action to Toy Story 2, but the reason to play the game is for the endless moments of jumping, swinging and climbing. I enjoyed simply running around in this oversized world—running through the rafters in an attic is a blast—and when required to scale vertiginous heights, I was into Toy Story 2 even more: it's been a long time since I've played a game where the level goes as far up as it does out.

Some will play Toy Story 2 and be disappointed with the way it looks, refusing to accept a game on Dreamcast that has avoidable pop-up, rudimentary geometry and basic textures. The rest of us will forget that it's a casual port and judge it for what it is: a fun game. **GR**



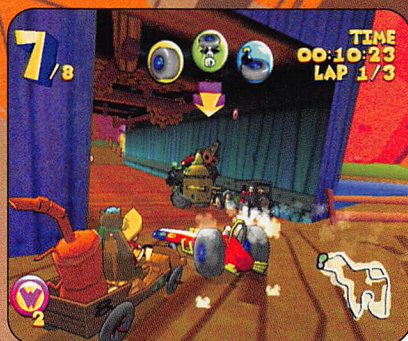
■ LONG-LOST GAMEPLAY LOADS OF FUN
■ LOVE THE THEME; FANTASTIC MUSIC

■ YEAH, IT SHOULD LOOK BETTER THAN THIS
■ YOU NEED TO ADJUST TO THE TOUCHY CAMERA AND CONTROL

REPUBLIC SAYS...

DRAWING FROM THE APPEALING THEME OF THE MOVIE, TOY STORY 2 COMPLETES ITS SUCCESS WITH ENTERTAINING PLATFORMER PLAY MECHANICS.

B



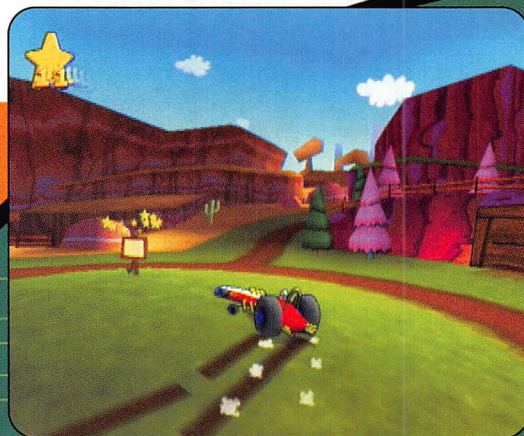
Cutting-edge graphics and yet another inspired kart universe combine for the Dreamcast's first toon-town racer

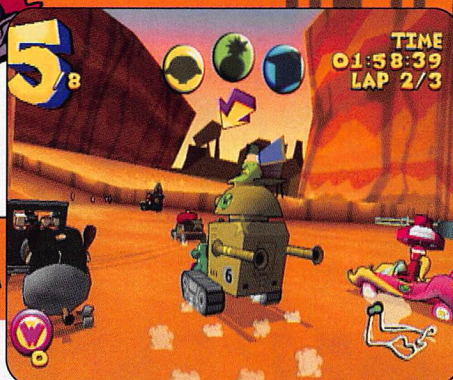
I must admit that the emergence of a Wacky Races racer for the Dreamcast reeked of an attempt to exploit one of the '60s most surreal and entertaining cartoons—for the second time. After the license was slaughtered once on the \$700-midget-coffee-table 3DO, this smelled like another absurd ripoff in the making. Thankfully, those must have been remnants from the last few PS2 releases I was smelling, because instead what we have here is the first great kart racer for the Dreamcast. What CTR and Mario Kart did for the PS and N64, Wacky Races should do for Sega's great white hope. Combining the craziest crew to ever crank up a car with the latest trend in polygonal techniques—a phenomenal proce-

dure that gives polys a three-dimensional hand-drawn look, which you'll also find in the upcoming Jet Set Radio and Sonic Bash—Wacky Races delivers on all counts. Linked by an overworld hub similar to Diddy Kong Racing and CTR, the similarities soon peel away as the first race begins. While Wacky Races is cut out of the same mold as the aforementioned racers, the races themselves take on an entirely fresh perspective. While they are obviously visually arresting, the moment the narrator kicks in and the cast begins exchanging their trademark banter, you begin to appreciate that this is not just another steering exercise. "Hello there Penelope my dear," exclaims the gentlemanly Peter Perfect as he passes the lovely

WACKY RACES

BY DAVE HALVERSON



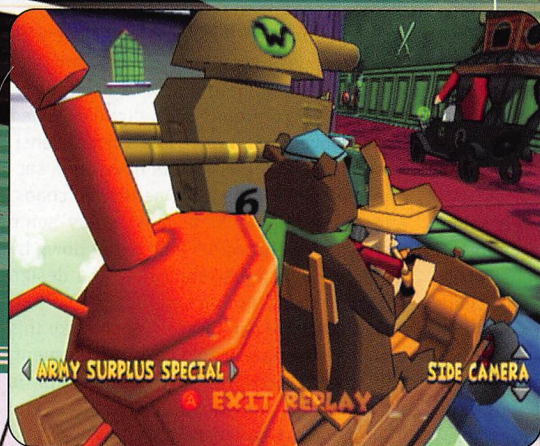


Penelope Pitstop. The entire cast is in peak form as you vie for position. Using each racer's specialized gadgets, together with the game's intuitive Kart or Advanced control scheme, you must place first to earn stars and open up subsequent stages within each world. While the types of worlds liken to those of kart racers past (including ice, desert, old west, forest, cavernous and other such themes), the way in which they are presented borrows greatly from SCE's *Motor Toon Racing*. The cars bend and animate with the ebb and flow of the terrain while the polygonal trappings look as if a rainbow of vivid colors were poured over their shapely wire frames. Once you're rolling, WR will remind you a lot of CTR. Shortcuts and forks in the road abound as the 10 combatants swap positions in extremely close quarters. Until you master each course, the pack doesn't thin out too much, so it takes a focused effort to take the checkered, as small leads are short lived. Mastering each course is a must

to progress into the later rounds. Pat Pending challenges in each hub will provide you with the tools, as long as you meet the challenge, but the rest is up to you.

Aside from a slight drop in frame rate amidst a screen brimming with awe-inspiring vehicular mayhem, this is as wholly fulfilling an experience as you're likely to derive from a kart-style racing game. The game can be played with the screen split either way for two players in the tournament mode or by up to four on previously opened tracks. The game suffers the usual strain from the smaller viewing areas and somewhat slower speeds, but the option is there if you care to use it.

Comparing this universe to most of today's cartoons, one thing is painfully evident: the state of American animation and creativity is in a terrible slump, except for a few exceptions. Like Ren and Stimpy most recently, the Wacky Races universe transcends the age barrier and thusly so does this game, which I found both massively entertaining and visually arresting. **GR**



■ A FREAKIER BATCH OF TOON MISFITS YOU WILL NOT FIND
■ THE GRAPHICS ARE OUTSTANDING

■ THE GAME'S BIG, TOO, AND LOADED WITH LOTS OF EXTRAS
■ FRAME RATE DIPS IN CROWDS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THE FIRST KART RACER FOR THE DC IS LOADED, CONTAINING EVERYTHING THAT MADE CTR AND DKR SMASH HITS. PLUS, IT'S BASED ON THE FRUITIEST CAST EVER ASSEMBLED!

B



POWER STONE 2

BY MIKE HOBBS

Not as tightly wound as the original, Power Stone excites with its wild 4-player action and sprawling new stages



With Power Stone 2, no one can accuse Capcom of delivering a by-the-numbers-sequel of the sort that typified some generations of their vast Street Fighter franchise. Instead, what we have is a sequel with a completely different set of goals, a game whose complexion has been changed so greatly that proponents of the original may even reject what's on offer here. That would be a

shame, for Power Stone 2 is one of the great four-player experiences on Dreamcast. However, as I have mentioned in the past, as a two-player game, the original has it beat hands down.

Power Stone 2 succeeds in its new mission of offering three- to four-player excitement in many different ways, but the most obvious is through sheer chaos. With four characters running around in the massive, multi-part new levels, hopping into cannons, launching catapults, shooting from tanks, throwing players off screen and dealing with level-specific hazards is a recipe for game-

playing madness. Add the fact that there are now more than three Power Stones per level, meaning that multiple characters can be powered up and unleashing super attacks, and there is almost too much going on to comprehend. In fact, there are brief moments where it is simply impossible to follow what is happening, but in this game, that simply adds to the fun.

On the flip side, those who fell in love with the first game's two-player balance are likely to be disappointed with Power Stone 2. With the large arenas and slightly slowed player movement, the original's visual density and lightning-quick bouts have been sacrificed in favor of the aforementioned chaos. And those hoping to at least enjoy some inspired new characters may be let down by additions, which just don't have the design appeal of the returning favorites.

But I think we can forgive Capcom, for this ambitious sequel is a true enhancement, and what it sacrifices in two-player fun is returned in its wild and addictive three- and four-player action. **GR**

■ NEWFOUND FOUR-PLAYER ACTION A BLAST
■ NOT AS FINELY BALANCED AS ORIGINAL POWER STONE

■ FANTASTIC NEW STAGE DESIGN
■ NEW CHARACTER DESIGN NOT QUITE UP TO SNUFF

REPUBLIC SAYS...

MORE THAN JUST GIVING US MORE OF THE SAME, CAPCOM HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED THE NATURE OF THE BEAST WITH POWER STONE 2, AND THE RESULT IS CHAOTIC FUN.

B



CAUTION: MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR PEOPLE WHO SUCK AT VIDEO GAMES.

If you're going to try playing Digimon World, you'd better make sure you're wearing two pairs of underpants. See, some of these Digimon are so vicious and twisted they were actually banned from television. That's okay with them, there are more things to blow up in video games anyway. Like you. So if you think you've got enough game for Digimon World, bring it. But don't say we didn't warn you.



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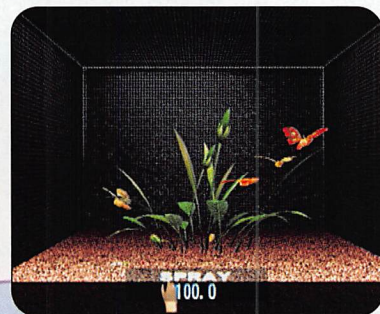
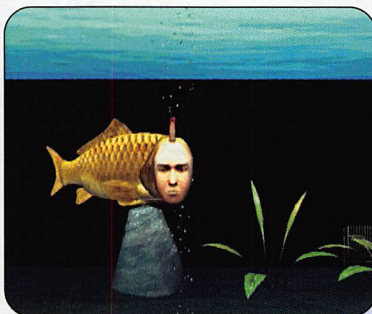


Comic Mischief



SEAMAN

BY MIKE HOBBS



Jean-Paul Gasse's landmark discovery of Seaman has led to the creation of the most surreal game the Dreamcast has ever seen



Welcome to the laboratory of Jean-Paul Gasse." So intones Leonard Nimoy at the start of each Seaman session, in what must be described as one of the most inspired bits of voice casting since Douglas Rain as HAL 9000. Hearing the voice of Spock, one of the true icons of 20th century mythology, lends the perfect air of surrealism to a game that I feared would lose just that quality in the often brutal trek through American localization. No, Seaman is as curious, funny, and interesting a game in English that it was in Japanese, but what remains to be seen is just how Americans will respond to this game.

On the one hand, there will be those who see Seaman as the most vacuous waste of time (and money) since the original Tamagotchi. Let's face it, raising human-headed fish and talking into a funny little green microphone, well, where's the pleasure in that? Ah, but there are those who will find endless fascination in Seaman, like I did.

Hatching a little school of miniscule Gillmen (as Leonard Nimoy calls them) and watching them grow, develop, and die over weeks was an oddly compelling, vaguely disturbing experience, one that I am quite happy to recommend. For like all good games, Seaman is nothing less than a metaphor for life—in this case, an amazingly surreal and creative metaphor.

This metaphor can be best illustrated in the insect cage that eventually accompanies the water tank that houses the maturing Seamen. An ecosystem unto itself, this insect cage supplies food for the Seamen in the form of moth larvae. A balance must be struck between feeding larvae to Seaman, and allowing some of them to mature into moths, who will then lay eggs, leading to more larvae. Get the balance wrong, and the supply of larvae will diminish and the Seamen will starve.

It wasn't until I got the insect cage that I really understood what developers Vivarium were ultimately trying to achieve with Seaman. The game is not about the voice recognition technology, which is spotty but very trippy when it works, but about maintaining balance in this virtual and self-contained environment. Vivarium is trying to teach us a little bit about life, about the precarious nature of it, and how the slightest imbalance can quickly lead to death.

Lofty ideas for a video game, but then this isn't your typical bit of software. **GR**

■ AS ORIGINAL AS GAMES GET
■ VERY FAITHFUL TO THE JAPANESE ORIGINAL

■ BRILLIANT LEONARD NIMOY NARRATION
■ VOICE RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY NOT QUITE THERE YET

REPUBLIC SAYS...

CARING FOR SEAMAN IS A DAILY RESPONSIBILITY, AND BASED ON YOUR PSYCHE, THE ATTACHMENT WILL EITHER GROW OR DIMINISH OVER TIME. FOR ME, IT GREW.

B+

www.gamersrepublic.com

Humor

**IT'S A WORLD OF INTENSE ACCURACY,
RICH GRAPHICS AND UNBELIEVABLE DETAILS.
NOW GET OUT THERE AND DESTROY IT.**

GUNDAM SIDE STORY 0079

It's Gundam Side Story 0079, Rise from the Ashes with 3D battle simulation, movie-quality sound track and Gundam – quality mass destruction. Electronic Gaming Monthly™ called it, "... some of the richest graphics yet on Dreamcast. Each of the mechs are cut with so much detail, they look like FMV at a glance." And a glance is all the insidious Zaku forces will get, before your jump jet action and zoom-in weapon features blow them into another dimension.



WATCH GUNDAM WING ONLY ON

TOONAMI
**CARTOON
NETWORK**

Sega Dreamcast

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No online battle and no Twin Stick controller for the U.S., but the best Model 3 conversion to date is well worth playing

Poor Virtual On. This minor masterpiece of one-on-one fighting was not even granted a U.S. release by the domestic arm of the game's Japanese parent. Snatched up by Activision, Virtual On then lost two of its most coveted possessions: online play and the empowering Twin Stick controller. And considering Sega's current infatuation with all things online, one could only view a networkable version of Virtual On as a wonderful, hi-tech showcase for the joys of remote battle. But alas, we have nothing to do with these decisions.

Or do we? Sadly, Virtual On is just not a "viable property," as some might put it, and whose fault is that? It's partially ours for not embracing Virtual On fully in the past, but that's not been easy. The arcade cabinets were expensive and rare, and by the time the brilliant Net Link version arrived on Saturn, it was way too late for anyone to care. So in reality, the game never really had a chance of succeeding in the States. That could have changed with the Dreamcast's virtually perfect conversion of the Model 3 wonder, but seeing as

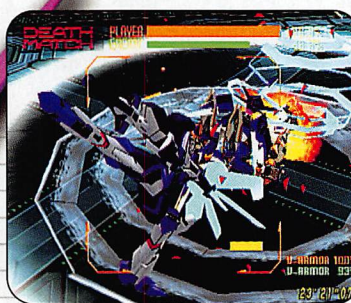
how we're not getting the complete experience of the game, we'll never know of its true potential.

But let's still be thankful that we're playing the game at all. Not only is it one of the most visually stunning games in recent memory, but its play is also some of the most electrifying. Just don't expect to get Virtual On in the first half an hour. Being one of the most unique one-on-one fighters in existence, it can be difficult to wrap one's head around the play and control system at first crack. Given some time, however, the delights of the game become clear, first in the amount of strategy that can be used in combat, then in the sheer speed and intensity that matches can attain. It's simply the best mech combat game ever made.

But most will be stuck playing the game with the mushy DC pad, and all will be without the benefit of full-screen, online battles. At least the link mode is intact, but have you ever seen a DC link cable? Me neither. Still, this is a masterful game any way you slice it, a true testament to Sega's finely honed arcade sensibilities. **GR**

VIRTUAL ON

BY MIKE HOBBS



- NEAR-PERFECT MODEL 3 CONVERSION
- BRILLIANT ARCADE-BRED ONE-ON-ONE GAMEPLAY

- TWIN STICK CONTROLLERS IMPOSSIBLE TO COME BY
- LINK MODE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ONLINE NETWORKED PLAY

REPUBLIC SAYS...

IT'S NOT THE PERFECT VERSION OF VIRTUAL ON THAT THE JAPANESE ENJOY, BUT THIS TESTAMENT TO SEGA'S DESIGN SKILLS IS VERY COMFORTABLE ON DC, AND A BLAST TO PLAY.

B+

www.gamerep.com



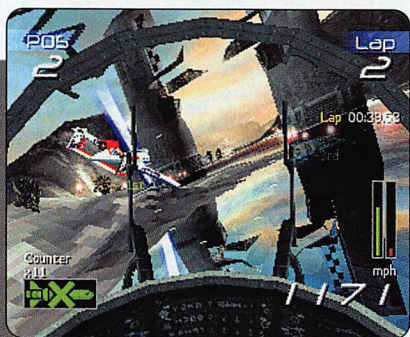
U-ON



NGEN

RACING

BY MIKE HOBBS



A game like NGEN proves that there are still new ideas to explore in the racing genre. Much like the original Wipeout did in the early days of the PS, NGEN offers something new, this time in the twilight of the PlayStation's life cycle. Taking full advantage of the concept of high-speed jet racing, NGEN is an original and thrilling ride that almost overwhelms the player with the execution of its concept.

Part of the excitement of NGEN's design is that this isn't a typical left/right racing experience. You have Ace Combat-like control over the aircraft, at least on the challenging Pro control setting, and you can affect ailerons and rudders separately, adding so much to the fun of the game and the thrill and satisfaction of controlling it. Plus, the clever concept of making the planes fly faster when closer to the ground adds a whole new level

of positioning considerations, and following the wildly undulating topography takes nearly as much skill and concentration as negotiating corners, more or less doubling the amount of control input that the game requires. In fact, the level of difficulty in simply getting the planes around the courses as quickly as possible makes the included weapon system more of a distraction than an enhancement. There is easily enough going on with the pure racing aspect that the ability to attack opponents simply adds too much to the mix I think. And this condition is worsened by an unchangeable control layout quirk that makes firing weapons awkward in the heat of racing. In a perfect world, the weapons could be turned off completely.

The game's offensive capabilities may be a matter of preference, but there is no debating the merits of the game's visual presentation. The ambitious engine may show a few rough edges here and there, but the sensation of speed and of flying over mirror-smooth water surfaces through slick, organic environments is an experience not to be missed. And the replays, showcasing the realistic aircraft movement, are a joy to behold.

NGEN Racing is a great effort, full of challenge and visual finesse, but I feel the designers went a little far in the game's overall difficulty level. Yet there is plenty to enjoy here, from the generous racing challenges to the various one-on-one modes. Wipeout fans will like this game. **GR**

■ INNOVATIVE CONCEPT DONE VERY WELL
■ CLEVER GAMEPLAY AND THRILLING SENSE OF SPEED

■ WEAPONS DIFFICULT TO USE IN THE HEAT OF RACING
■ NOT VERY HIGH ON VISUAL VARIETY

REPUBLIC SAYS...

NGEN HAS A FEW NIGGLING FAULTS THAT KEEP IT OUT OF THE REALM OF WIPEOUT, BUT IT IS A PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED ALTERNATIVE RACER WITH SOME GREAT IDEAS.

B





The flawed but engaging Parasite Eve gets a surprisingly accomplished makeover in this atmospheric sequel

Three possible reactions to Parasite Eve II: (a) Fans of the original will balk at the game's insistence to deviate from the gameplay path of Parasite Eve, (b) fans of Resident Evil will embrace it, (c) it will be panned by critics with the inane argument that it's too similar to Resident Evil and therefore is ineffective.

Stick me in category "b." I liked Parasite Eve, but this highly involving sequel is a far superior game in nearly every way. It only fails as a vehicle for good story telling: the dialogue is goofy, boring and mired in preposterous pseudoscience. (Because I wasn't aware of any story, I enjoyed the Japanese version more, leaving the story telling up to the visual sequences and my own conclusions.)

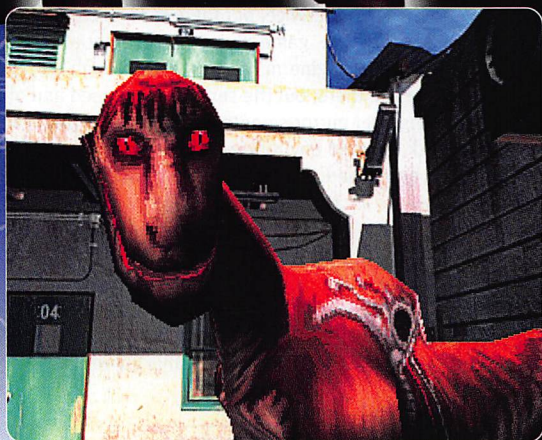
The plot: an airborne retrovirus is

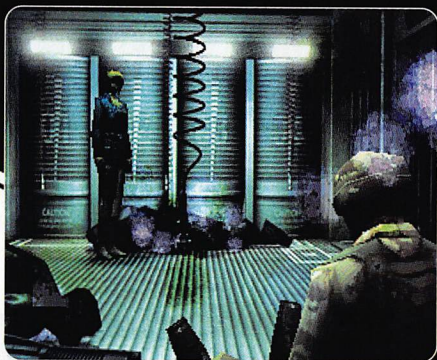
infecting its host, manipulating DNA sequences to form an aberrant mutation known as a Neo-Mitochondria. As sightings of these destructive creatures begins to increase, a team of hunters called M.I.S.T. send Aya Brea into the heart of the chaos to uncover clues to the proliferation of the Neo-Mitochondria. Government cover-ups, wicked corporate conspiracies, evolutionary tampering and various other nasty circumstances arise as Aya moves from downtown LA to the Mojave desert to an underground laboratory.

Never mind the story. The strength of the game is in its dark mood and atmosphere, heightened by some creepily inventive monster designs. The mutated creatures range from human forms to enormous beasts to toxic blobs, with the

PARASITE EVE 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER

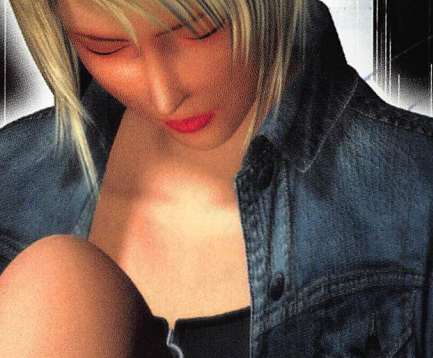
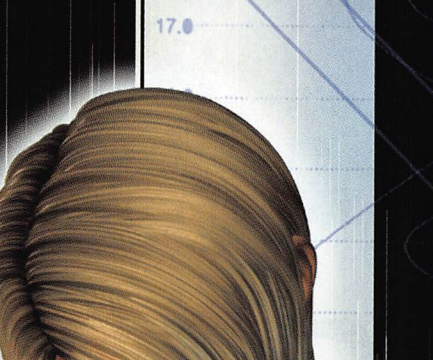




occasional boss battle revealing some spectacularly freakish creations that dominate the screen. One of the more intense confrontations involves you fighting a mutant with a giant exhaust pipe rammed down its throat, spewing flames to back you into a corner for a pounding from its ground-rumbling fists.

While the original Parasite Eve set its time-sensitive battle sequences in a spherical grid that suspended movement when cast over the enemies, this time around you are free to move about without freezing the action when initiating an attack. Supplementing a typical arsenal of firearms, which are purchased by bounty points earned in battle, psychic powers can also be invoked, unlocked and increased in strength with the distribution of experience points.

Parasite Eve II could be labeled a survival horror game, mirroring the Resident Evil series with puzzles to solve, doors to unlock, blood-thirsty monsters to take down, and gloomy atmosphere and cinematic story telling to stoke the ambience. Yet it is, in many ways, its own, often compelling creation. It is big on action, saturated in detailed settings—I especially enjoyed the uniquely solemn desert town—and an engaging entertainment from beginning to end. **GR**



■ THICK ATMOSPHERE, DETAILED ENVIRONS, GREAT EFFECTS
■ EXCELLENT TARGET-BASED BATTLE SYSTEM

■ GRUESOME CHARACTER DESIGNS
■ STORY AND DIALOGUE EVEN MORE AWKWARD THAN ORIGINAL

REPUBLIC SAYS...

LIKE PARASITE EVE, THIS EXCELLENT SEQUEL IS RICH IN VISUALS, YET MORE INTERESTING SETTINGS AND AN IMPROVED BATTLE SYSTEM RESULT IN A BETTER GAME.

B+



CHRONO CROSS

BY BRADY FIECHTER

The beloved Chrono Trigger gets the sequel it deserved, a marvelous RPG with moments of deep emotion

Our finite minds may dwell on reality as the present moment, but we are certainly not stopped from dreaming of what lies beyond the known universe and boundary of time. There must be something out there, a force or presence or existence of infinite sprawl. Maybe, as some in science believe, the path which leads to that something begins at the point where space-time breaks down and black holes and cosmic tears occur. As any good fan of science fiction knows, actually making the journey guarantees catastrophe. So it comes as no surprise when Serge, the unwitting hero in Chrono Cross, is drawn into a time warp, a paradox is formed that brings instability to both worlds he travels freely between.

Of course, Serge becomes embroiled in the endless complexities of his choices as hero, embarking on an odyssey of battles and consequences, of friendship and revelations. The underpinnings of the

time-travel theme inspire some truly memorable moments, and a surprising revelation near the end of the game actually gives an entertaining explanation to the typically banal concept of fate.

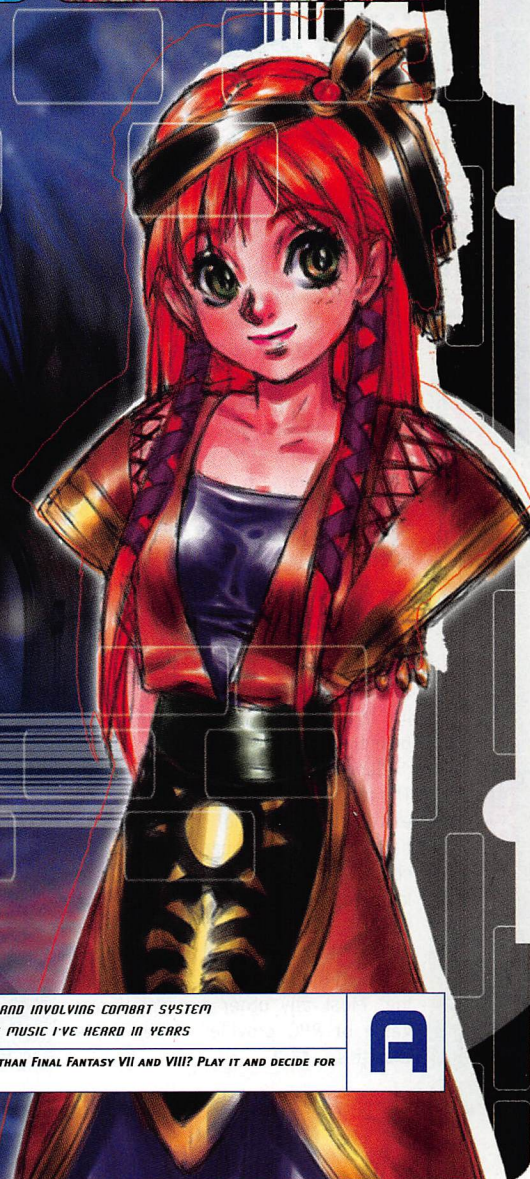
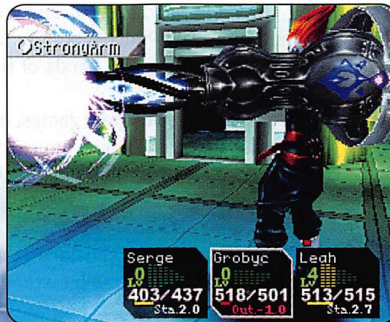
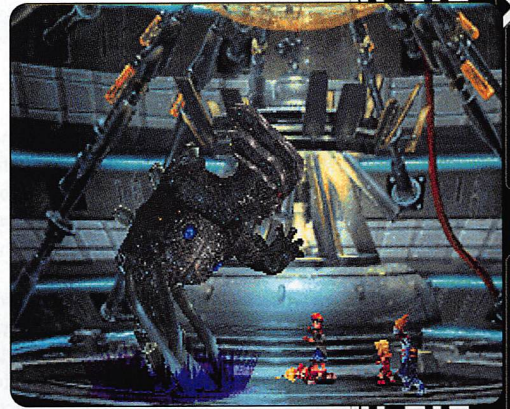
One of the central goals in the game is to locate the Frozen Flame, a mythical object that



can control the flow of time and space. Tied to the omnipotent god Lavos—who destroyed the world thousands of years earlier—and sought after by a despotic general named Lynx, the Frozen Flame proves to be an endless source of conflict. And here's where the superbly original combat system comes in. Aided by two of what eventually can become a group of around 40 party members, you fight it out in some tremendously engaging, lengthy, strategically taxing RPG battle scenes, going up against a ton of creatures of superb design and exceptional structure. Instead of earning huge experience points, characters gradually grow in strength and skill after big battles, which are increasingly rewarding as the hierarchy of the Element system expands.

As much as I enjoyed the future worlds of the last two Final Fantasy games and their compelling dystopian visions, I am grateful that Square has crafted an RPG that goes back into the distant past. The world is not overcome by towering metropolises or shadowy anachronistic technology or hopeless graves of twisted concrete and steel. Chrono Cross is alive with rich, gorgeous colors and rich tones, and despite being prerendered, the visual canvas retains an incomparable hand-drawn quality of absorbing beauty. Its visual strokes are at times a work of art.

The places you will travel to are grand and exciting. Pirate ships sail the seas. Curious monsters hide in the swamps and fly through volcanic caverns. Dragons await your approach in the mountains, under the desert sands, on jungle islands. In one of the most intriguing areas of the game, a time vortex leads to a frozen oceanic landscape caught in enigmatic ruin; at the center of the wasteland is a city where the buildings appear to have become violently intertwined like a giant briar patch of steel. With the best RPG score since Final Fantasy VI spilling over the images, there's no resisting Chrono Cross' powerful hold. **GR**



- ONE GORGEOUS LOCATION AFTER ANOTHER
- RICHLY INSPIRED CHARACTER DESIGNS

- ORIGINAL AND INVOLVING COMBAT SYSTEM
- BEST RPG MUSIC I'VE HEARD IN YEARS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

IS CHRONO CROSS BETTER THAN FINAL FANTASY VII AND VIII? PLAY IT AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF.





RPG MAKER

review by c. hoffman • dev: ascii • pub: agetec • avail: now



They should have called this game "Relationship Killer." Say goodbye to your friends, your family, and your significant others, because RPG Maker is a game that can suck you in, swallow you whole, and keep you attached to your PlayStation for days straight if you let it.

For any RPG fan who's ever thought, "It would be so cool if they did this," or ever had an epic tale to tell, this is the game for you. RPG Maker lets you create your own massive SNES-quality adventure, from characters to monsters to weapons to items to dungeons to towns to skills to storyline to special effects. A graphics program called Anime Maker lets players design their own graphics from the ground up, and the text and scenarios are all up to you. Heck, you can make a quest about the great Prince Albert on his mission to get magic garbanzo beans if it strikes your fancy. It's all in the hands of the player, or game designer as the case may be.

But don't think that you're going to sit down and just start cranking out great games. It's going to take quite a bit of effort to come up with a decent game. You'll spend hours trying to master the interface, learning what all the commands do and experimenting to get the most out of the multitude of options available. And a few aspects are a bit lacking—notably the background editor. With so much to modify, learning how to use the game is almost like learning a programming language; only the most hardcore RPG fans need apply. But for the fanatics who want to create wonderful worlds and incredible stories, you need look no further. This is the only game you'll need. **GR**



KOUDELKA

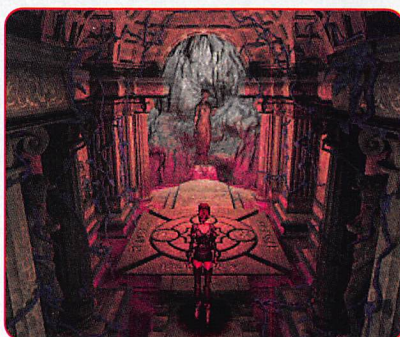
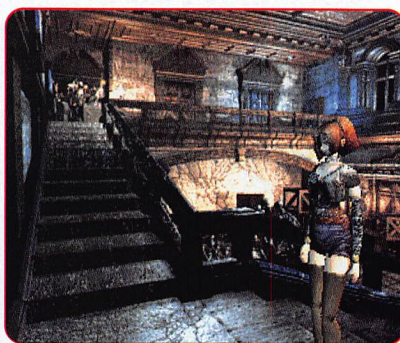
review by c. hoffman • dev: sacnoth • pub: infogrames • avail: now



As far as settings for games go, you can't ask for much better than that of Koudelka. A dark, haunted Gothic cathedral in the 1800s crawling with monsters should be the ideal locale for a foreboding, atmospheric horror RPG. Unfortunately, instead of building on this foundation and creating a chilling tale, Koudelka's potential sinks in a tedious swamp of lifeless visuals and dull gameplay.

Simply put, Koudelka is boring. As you wander the lonely halls of the musty monastery, you'll encounter very little. Though the prerendered chambers look fairly good, they offer very little (if any) animation, virtually no characters to interact with and very few objects to examine or pick up. Once in a while, you'll be sucked into random combat, where you'll fight in the dulllest turn-based 3D battles ever. Though slightly strategic, the fights are about as fun and as challenging as watching grass grow, a problem only made worse by the fact that they take place on a flat plane without any backgrounds. Bosses are a bit tougher, but that only means you'll have to occasionally spend a few mind-numbing hours leveling up. Should something potentially exciting actually occur, the game simply writes it on screen instead of showing it (i.e., "A man starts shooting at you!" and you're sucked into a boss fight).

Plenty of other problems abound. The religion-themed story moves along extremely slow, the characters are unlikable, and the puzzles are far too simple. There isn't even any music to keep you from dozing off. The leveling up of weapons and spells is kind of nice, and the voice acting is fine, but these are hardly reasons to keep playing. Most any other survival horror game or RPG provides better thrills than this. **GR**

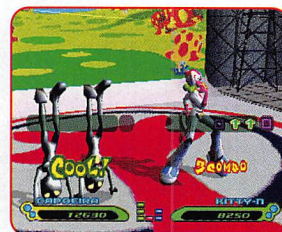


BUST A GROOVE 2

review by b. fletcher • dev/pub: enix • avail: now



Space Channel 5 may have the incendiary Ulala and sparkle with eccentric energy, but for infectious beats and precision control, Bust A Groove 2 steals the show on PlayStation. Returning to the dance floor are the weird and colorful personalities of Shorty, Heat and Hiro, along with a bevy of new dancers and moves. While following the same beat-oriented, rhythm-matching gameplay pattern of Bust A Groove, this improved sequel demands a more accurate step to the music, rewarding gamers who are more accurately flowing with the music. It takes more of a short step than a leap ahead of the original, but Bust A Groove 2 still knows how to move. **GR**

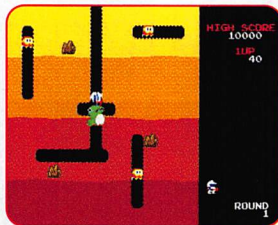




NAMCO MUSEUM

review by m. hobbs • dev: mass media • pub: namco • avail: now

B- There's little that can be said about these cheapo compilations. Namco's first such disc for the Dreamcast offers up their most memorable early arcade excursions, and if it's a trip down memory lane that you're after, well, here it is. Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Galaga, Galaxian, Dig Dug, and Pole Position make up this compilation, a far less esoteric mix than we're used to compared with Namco's numerous PlayStation Museum entries. Of the games included here, only Galaga had me hooked once again, but mostly because hearing the music brought back warm and fuzzy feelings of a responsibility-free childhood. Your results may vary. **GR**



X-MEN: MUTANT AC.

review by c. hoffman • dev: paradox • pub: activision • avail: now

B- When Activision signed up to make an X-Men fighting game, they really had their work cut out for them. Professor X and his band of mutants have been around the video game block a few times, and it's resulted in some incredible titles, most notably the awesome fighters from Capcom. While X-Men: Mutant Academy isn't quite able to reach those lofty standards, it does many things right on its own.

At its heart, Mutant Academy is a 2D fighter set in a polygonal world. Anyone who's played the Capcom games will feel right at home with the familiar "three punches, three kicks" setup, and you'll be able to pull off optic blasts and razor-sharp slashes without a hitch. The graphics are extremely nice for PlayStation – smooth models with rounded muscles (and other body parts) and textures that do the comic heroes justice. The backgrounds also look good, but the arena selection (including places like Gambit's bayou hideout or a New York sewer) is a bit dull. With the wealth of X-Men history, they could have found some more interesting backgrounds (Asteroid M, anyone?). Ten characters are playable, including Wolverine, Phoenix, Gambit, Storm, and Sabretooth, and while all of their powers are represented, they only have a couple special moves each. Also, Mutant Academy has tons of bonuses, like comic book pics and extra outfits to unlock, ensuring high replay.

In the end though, Mutant Academy boils down to a decent game that lacks the technique, flash and action of the X-titles that came

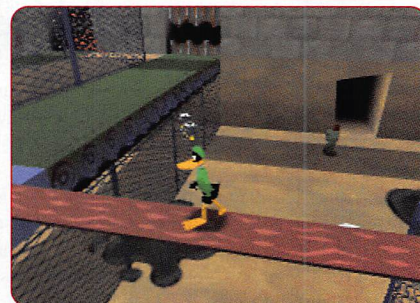


before it. If you're fan and don't have any older X-Men games, you'll probably be happy with this, but when there are so many other astounding fighting games featuring our favorite mutants, this one is a bit tough to wholeheartedly recommend. **GR**

DUCK DODGERS

review by b. fiechter • dev: paradigm ent. • pub: infogrames • avail: now

D- Duck Dodgers is a drab, lifeless, laborious action-platform game. There are moments when the game shows hints of life, but then the headache-inducing frame rate and spastic camera conspire to send the game into a permanent flatline. The chance to draw from the personality of the Looney Tunes universe is completely wasted, lost in a swamp of sloppy gameplay and murky, cheerless visuals. **GR**



BALL BREAKERS

review by b. fiechter • dev: lost toys • pub: take 2 • avail: now

D- It's the distant future and synthetic prisoners have had their legs cut off and replaced with balls. For sport, these anemically constructed prisoners are forced to wage battle against each other in small, treacherous arenas



that are designed and lit like those amusing sci-fi sets you see on the action channel at 2 a.m. Events range from king of the hill to power ball to running the gauntlet; execution of the game's shabbily basic design ranges from inept to unacceptable. Save your ten dollars for *Battlefield Earth* on PPV. **GR**

DINOSAUR

review by m. hobbs • dev: sandbox studios/big grub • pub: ubi soft • avail: now

D- At the very least, I hoped Dinosaur would be the usual modern Disney game adaptation along the lines of Tarzan, a gorgeous if slightly sluggish 2.5D action game. Unfortunately, my hopes were quickly squashed when I booted



up Dinosaur. I don't know what to make of this game, a top-down 3D adventure game with pitiful graphics, lousy sound, poor collision, imprecise control, and ill-conceived objective-based gameplay. On second thought, I do know what to make of Dinosaur: it's terrible. **GR**

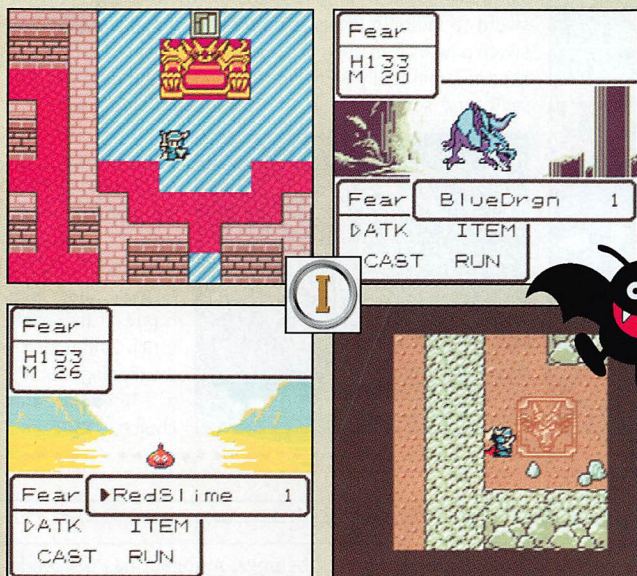
GAMES MOBILIZED

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mobilized gaming

GAME BOY COLOR **DRAGON WARRIOR 1 & 2**
 dev/pub: enix • avail: august
 reviewed by e. fear **A-**

Two great RPG games on one cartridge? Sign us up! For the uninitiated, the 1988 and 1990 releases of these NES titles became cult classics in Japan (where the series is called Dragon Quest), spawning a long line of game sequels, comics, plush toys, and the like. And while these original games are over ten years old, they've stood the test of time...just check 'em out yourself.



The first game is a fairly straightforward quest to save the princess and defeat the evil Dragonlord, who has unleashed hordes of evil monsters upon the countryside. While the tasks are pretty linear (find A, take it to B, talk to C, etc.), the storyline is engaging, the battles are simple and balanced (unless you wander too far before leveling up enough), and the game simply draws you in.

The second game takes the story to the next level. Starting one hundred years after the first game's story, you play the descendent of the character you played in the first game, and while the basic concept is the same—an evil tyrant has appeared, and with him scores of monsters have populated the land—the game is now four times the size of the first. There are many more towns, castles, and dungeons to explore, more people to meet, more quests to fulfill, and the addition of controlling a sailing ship really opens the game up. This time around you end up with a party of three: yourself as the warrior prince, who only wields steel against the enemies, along with the prince of a neighboring castle who is

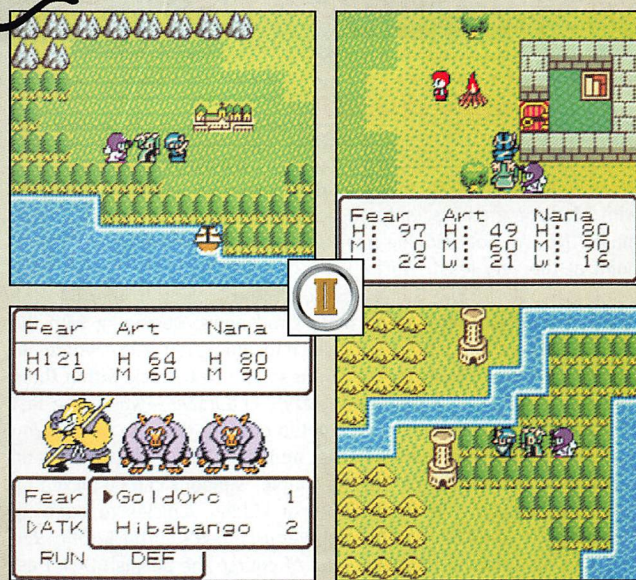
adept at both magic and fighting, and the princess of a destroyed kingdom, who is stronger at magic than physical combat.

Not only does the sheer size of the second game increase the playing time, but the quests are not nearly as straightforward. You'll need to speak to two, three, or more people in various locations to get clues as to where certain items are and what to do with them. Again, the game's balance is very good, in that if you go into a new area that you're not ready for level-wise, you'll know it right away, as the monsters rip you limb from limb. That's your cue to level up before going any further.

For those who played the original games, you'll notice right away that Enix has changed a few names of towns, people, and items, presumably to keep pace with the times and to clarify things from the first editions. Some things seem awfully PC, though, like changing "Mink Coat" to the more generic "Fur Coat." It still works, though.

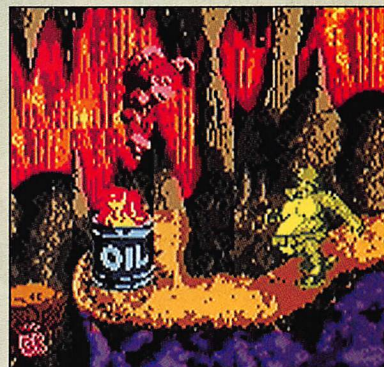
The bottom line is that these are awesome and timeless RPG titles, regardless of the system they're on. The added benefit of getting to play them anywhere is quite a bonus, and on the GBC, the color palettes Enix chose really make the game pop off the screen. If you're still running a black and white GB, go ahead and trade up. You'll be glad you did.

Since the next chapter in the Zelda saga is not due out until Christmas (at the earliest), reliving classics like Dragon Warrior I & II is a great way to pass the time—a lot of time—in anticipation. **GR**



GAME BOY COLOR **DONKEY KONG COUNTRY**
 dev: rare • pub: nintendo • avail: august 28
 previewed by e. fear

Rare is set to revive another SNES classic on the GBC—Donkey Kong Country! Featuring all the levels from the original 16-bit game (and reportedly a couple of bonus levels), it will feature the same rendered 3D-style DK characters that the DK Land series sported on the GB, but tweaked to use every ounce of the color machine's power. There will also be a head-to-head play mode using the link cables, and support for the Game Boy Printer. And while Rare has admittedly had to cut here and there to cram the 16-bit original into an 8-bit cart, what we've seen so far is still cause to rejoice. **GR**



Gamers' Republic

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GAME BOY COLOR	CRYSTALIS dev/pub: nintendo • avail: now reviewed by c. hoffman	B-
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While I really appreciate Nintendo Software Technology Corp. bringing back NES classics on the Game Boy Color, I have to ask – why Crystalis?



Not that SNK's cult classic action-RPG is bad or anything, but there are many better games to port (cough, Metroid, Castlevania) and while this remake is perfectly playable, it's not spectacular either.

Set in a post-apocalyptic future (the world was virtually destroyed in 1997 according to the NES version) where sorcery rules and technology is evil, Crystalis puts you in the armor of a great magician-warrior who needs to defeat the techno-wizard Dragonia. The only way to best him is with the sword Crystalis, and so you embark on a Zelda-style quest to forge the mighty blade. Pretty standard fantasy stuff, and so it remains throughout the game.

You get your find-an-item, give-it-to-someone, get-help-in-return mini quests, a fair selection of items and spells, and many types of equipment to buy, plus you get your typical 8-bit top-down graphics. The ability to charge up your sword to multiple levels is pretty cool (as is learning new sword powers that open access to new areas) but little flaws kept me from really enjoying the game. The music isn't too swift, and some parts of the quest seem sloppily thrown



together – I would often be told to do tasks I had already accomplished. Still, as action-RPGs go, Crystalis is more than adequate. It can't touch Zelda: Link's Awakening, but it's a fine second choice. **GR**

GAME BOY COLOR	WACKY RACES dev/pub: infogrames • avail: now reviewed by d. halverson	B
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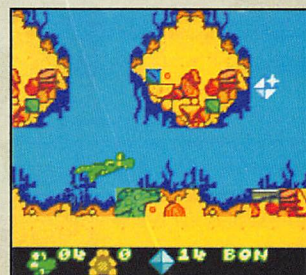
What would you think if I told you there existed a Game Boy Color game with Mode 7 graphics, smooth scaling sprites, and even tolerable music? No, I'm not smoking paint – it's true. From a graphical standpoint at the very least, Wacky Races is now the best looking racing game available for the Game Boy Color. And looking further into the actual gameplay, there's even more good news. Beginning with the menu, there are four modes from which to choose: Arcade – where finishing in the top three advances you to the next track within three three-lap Cups (Fun, Super, and Crazy); Endurance—where the last vehicle at each checkpoint is eliminated until it's down to one; Championship—a nine-race points battle; and Time Trial—which needs no explanation. Par for the kart racing course, weapons can be picked up and launched and there are plenty of hidden vehicles to open up including the Army Surplus Special, Peter Perfect's Turbo Terrific, Red Max and his Crimson Haybailer, and of course the devilish Dick Dastardly and his faithful sidekick Muttley. The locales all have nicely drawn and colored backgrounds, a good amount of hills, and there are even jumps to hit to clear lava pits and the like. It's two-lane racing all the way, but I'd have to say that Wacky Races is now the only competition for Top Gear Pocket 2. This license is definitely getting its just desserts. **GR**

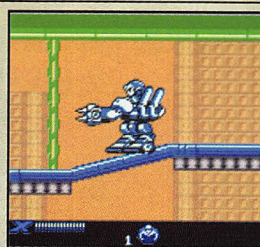
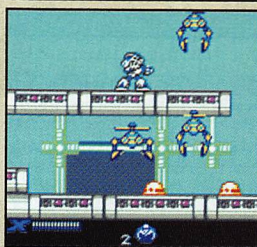


GAME BOY COLOR	CROC dev: argonaut • pub: thq • avail: now reviewed by e. fear	C+
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Taking Croc from 3D to 2D where it belongs, Argonaut has packed in five different worlds with five areas each (plus a boss battle). The control isn't intuitive right off the bat, but after a couple of levels you'll develop the touch that the game requires. The graphics are sharp and nicely drawn and the levels themselves scroll both horizontally and vertically providing a good amount of space to explore.

Although I could live without the password saves reminiscent of the old NES days, overall, Croc's a reasonably fun, albeit simplistic platformer that'll please fans of the series who want their Croc on the go. From what we saw (and played) at E3, however, Croc 2—with its overhead view and more manageable controls—may prove stronger for this franchise, making gamers forget this game pretty quickly. **GR**

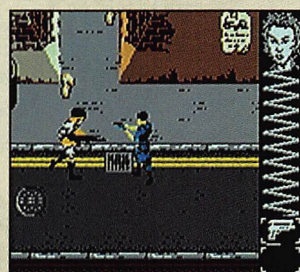
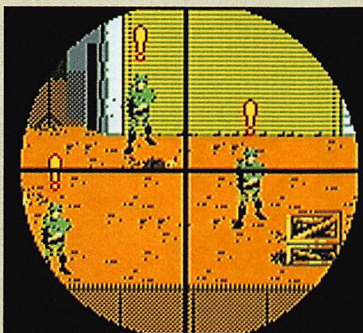


GAME BOY
COLOR**MEGA MAN EXTREME**developer/publisher: capcom • available: fall
previewed by c. hoffman

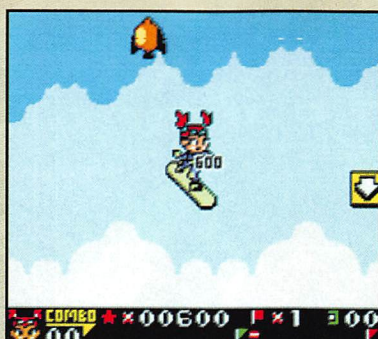
Mega Man Extreme (formerly Mega Man X) on the Game Boy Color looks like it will be a classic in its own time. Sticking to the tried-and-true Mega Man formula, Extreme draws eight levels from the 16-bit hits Mega Man X and X2 as Capcom's hero battles infamous Reploid foes like Storm Eagle, Flame Stag and Morph Moth. Of course, Mega Man can steal his enemies' powers as he defeats them, and acquire numerous upgrades as he tests players' shooting and platforming skills throughout the stages. The graphics faithfully recreate the SNES versions wonderfully, and even the tunes have translated well onto Game Boy. However, not everything is recycled: Mega Man has a new enemy (Techno) and a new ally (Midi) to deal with on his mission. Capcom has also added a quick-save system so players can quit the game at any time and pick up where they left off. Extreme looks excellent so far. **GR**

GAME BOY
COLOR**PERFECT DARK**dev: rare • pub: nintendo • avail: july 24
previewed by e. fear

Perfect Dark for the N64 has garnered more than a few fans—it's the number one game for the N64 and overall this month—but lest you think you've had enough of Joanna, be on the lookout for her adventures on the GBC. Actually, this game is a prequel to the N64 version, and promises greater insight into the storyline of its big brother. The GBC cart will utilize Nintendo's rumble feature, as well as the GBC's infrared port for transferring data to other handhelds. Those with a GameLink cable (and a friend with the game) can play head-to-head deathmatches, and, if you've got an N64 transfer pak (you know, the one you use for Pokémon Stadium) you can transfer data to your N64 Perfect Dark. We just have to wonder: how long until the movie comes out? **GR**

GAME BOY
COLOR**XTREME SPORTS**dev: way forward technologies • pub: infogrames • avail: july
reviewed by e. fear**B+**

Take two Gen-X characters (but you'll play as the girl every time!), put them on a remote island to compete in five extreme sports events (inline skating, skateboarding, street luge, skyboarding, and surfing) and you've got Xtreme Sports. This collection of sports events has been thoughtfully tweaked for the GBC, and you'll be hard pressed to find better control in



games dedicated to only one of these events. You'll start the game with no medals and no skills, but after running through training you'll be ready to start snatching medals all across the island. Certain areas are closed to you until you collect enough medals, and as you journey around the island challenging your fellow Gen-Xers, you'll begin to unravel the dark secret of the company backing the event (Xtreme Cola), and discover their link to the mysterious gang of punks known as the boneheads. Let the games begin! **GR**





Ever since our talk with Greg Thomas exactly twelve issues ago, we have wondered if Visual Concepts could accomplish the daunting task of delivering a sports game that would truly take advantage of the 56k modem nestled inside the Dreamcast. His candid remark—"Our plan for next year [and NFL 2K1] is to be up and running online"—left many people in skeptical disbelief.

Who could blame the naysayers? I mean, look at the checkered, often optimistic promises and painfully pessimistic realities from statements made by folks at SOA; many consumers still have a bitter taste in their mouths from uttering the word "Sega." Granted, the consistent string of hot titles keep reaffirming the performance power the Dreamcast holds, but there has yet to be a selection of games that prove a 56k modem can retain the integrity of smooth 60 frames-per-second and unhindered play mechanics.

This online paradox is no more: Just about every question someone might have about the abilities of playing a game as complex and fresh as Visual Concepts' sports titles is answered in this year's offerings. And not only is the game online, it looks freakin' amazing and plays even more efficient than last year's

innovative launch title.

A recent visit made by friends at Visual Concepts and Sega had us playing a game, online, with another Visual Concepts friend at the V.C. offices over 400 miles away. The game ran without a hitch, flaunting great new animation routines and instantaneous control commands. This technical feat left us all extremely impressed.

The improved list of attributes needs editorial space I cannot branch into in this issue. So the finer, more detailed and genuine characteristics found in the game will need to wait for next month. Just do yourself a favor and get your DC situated and ready to go online. **GR**



Are ya ready for some football!? I know I am. It's that time of year when all of the video game football franchises are close to release, and the first in our office is NFL GameDay 2001 from Sony's 989 Sports. I live for the start of the NFL season and playing GameDay 2001 has already got my juices flowing.

Living up to its dominant heritage, the game looks and plays great and includes brilliant advancements over GD2000: both the Total Control Passing and Advanced Moves features have been simplified, in-game help menus added to assist new players with the control scheme, additional player animations, a new play calling interface, and smarter AI.

The Create-A-Player and Custom Play Editor return, as does the General Manager mode with the ability to save and import a player from 989's NCAA GameBreaker. Also returning is the commentary by Dick Enberg and Phil Simms, complete with after-play telestrator. Not only are there new play calling screens, but the variety of plays on both offense and defense are so deep that it will help field generals confuse their opponents endlessly.

With 57 different NFL players helping to create the game, the opponent AI is top-notch, with defenses learning the offense tendencies and making adjustments accordingly. But if too tough, both the offensive and defensive AI aspects can be adjusted accordingly.

There's so much more to the game that you must check back next month for a complete, in-depth review of what might possibly be the best pigskin game of the 2000-2001 football season. **GR**



NFL GAMEDAY 2001



by: pooch developer: red zone publisher: 989 sports available: august



PLAYSTATION 2

The Madden series is the granddaddy of football titles and therefore the one to watch every year for new innovations to the genre. This year EA is giving NFL coaches their due by putting the real coaches' likenesses on the sidelines to provide tips and, in all the versions except N64, provide verbal comments to their teams and the referees. In the PS2 version, the detailed face of each pro coach will also be included.

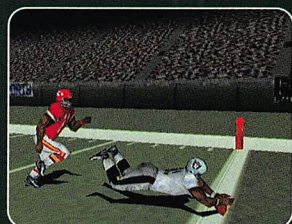
Another overdue advancement to the genre is that the actual player height and weight physics will be a factor in how much yardage the ball carriers gain: no longer will a skinny defensive back be able to easily tackle a bulky, charging full-back at the line of scrimmage.

Madden 2001 sports a new interface to make the menus easier to navigate. And new defensive controls allow players to instantly change formations to match the offensive reads.

Two other new and interesting innovations are the Multi-player Two-Minute Drill Competition—up to 10 N64 and PS players can play

against each other in two-minute drills—and the collection of Madden Cards: a first for the genre, PS2, N64 and PS owners will be able to unlock and collect "Madden Cards" by performing certain tasks, save them to memory cards, and trade them with friends.

Graphically, the PS2 version is simply superb. The big console showdown this fall will be the Sega Sports NFL 2K1 on DC versus EA Sports' Madden 2001 on PS2. Get ready for football gaming bliss. **GR**



NINTENDO 64



PLAYSTATION

MADDEN 2001

by: pooch developer: ea sports publisher: electronic arts available: fall



There's nothing like a good game of NFL Blitz with your buddy to satiate those quick, competitive video game fixes.

The Dreamcast, with its arcade-quality graphics capabilities, seems like the perfect home for this title – finally a console port that looks like the arcade version. The new, more polished, super-clean look of the character models in Blitz 2001 finally rids us of those ugly, blocky appendages.

Blitz moves so fast that there's hardly time to admire the graphics anyway. The pace is so frenetic that there almost isn't enough time in between plays to perform the humorous and tension-relieving body blows that make the game what it is.

Midway has added a host of new goodies to keep the game fresh for us seasoned Blitz veterans: there are new player animations—players now do back-flips and new celebrations after touchdowns; you can create your own team, players and plays; there are several mini-games, which are more for newcomers, such as quarterback and receiver trainings; controllable instant replays; and a new, sporty layout for play selections.

I'm also glad that they increased the number of plays available on both offense (27 or 36 depending on the team) and defense (18). But, as always, the play selection clock moves quickly, therefore so do you.

With the inclusion of a full season mode for multiple players, come September, there just might be enough reason to get hyped for yet another version of Blitz. **GR**



NFL BLITZ 2001



by: pooch developer/publisher: midway available: september



As in the real world, the college football video games seem to be a bit more exciting, unpredictable and have a faster pace than the NFL video games (except for NFL Blitz). But with the college games, there just isn't that certain bonding you get from playing with your favorite players in the pro games. This is because the college games don't use actual player names, just jersey numbers. Still, being able to control the fate of one's alma mater is quite empowering.

Although not perfect, the latest in the NCAA GameBreaker series has quite a bit going for it. Most notably, 175 different NCAA Division 1A teams from which to choose, including 64 classic teams, such as '92 Florida State, '83 Miami (FL), and Lou Holtz's '89 Notre Dame squad. The AI has also been updated and features a whopping 1,800 defensive and offensive plays designed from a variety of college players, including the 1999 Heisman Trophy winner, the University of Wisconsin's Ron Dayne (now a member of the NY Giants offense).

Graphically, the game uses the same poly engine as NFL GameDay, which is superb (for the PlayStation), and is improved over last year's version with more than 250 motion-captured animations.

On the audio front, Keith Jackson returns to provide play-by-play and commentary as only he can. And the 30 different college fight songs and ambient sound effects pull you into the action quite nicely.

As with its older brother GameDay, the gameplay is deep with a variety of options and play modes, including 21 different college bowl titles to go after.

With football season just around the corner, the video game football wars are starting to heat up. **GR**

NCAA GAMEBREAKER 2001

by: pooch developer: red zone publisher: 989 studios available: august





The PS2 is starting to look a lot more attractive to me now that I have had the opportunity to play FIFA Soccer. Although I haven't had the chance to scrutinize the menu system, since this is the import version, I have been able to figure out the game holds at least 75 teams with all of the custom tailoring options like substituting and play formations.

Cosmetically, the game is a gem. There is very little shimmering, and the energy behind the animations strung throughout are beautiful. The pace of the game lacks a bit of the zing I am used to, but after an extended play session, I have come to learn that the game moves at a natural celerity.

The game is easy to pick up and play and for those seasoned in the play mechanics, a deeper level of gameplay can be enjoyed as well, making this a game to play months on end. A localized version will uncover just how much depth lies beneath the exciting surface. **GR**



FIFA SOCCER

by: tom straton developer/publisher: electronic arts available: november



I thought I had made a mistake by playing FIFA Soccer on PS2 before playing ESPN MLS GameNight, but that was not the case, as this game stands up to FIFA on many levels. Sure the graphics in FIFA look better, but MLS has got good genes as it is running off of the outstanding International Superstar Soccer engine that we saw on the N64 back in 1997 (and actually haven't seen since). The engine's physics are tight, the passing is fluid and simple, there is a variety of camera angles, the graphics are clean, and the CPU AI gives you a super competitive game of soccer: I recommend starting at Novice level and working your way up the other three difficulty levels.

For MLS fanatics, this is a must-buy, as it is endorsed by Carlos Valderamma of the Tampa Bay Mutiny (known as much for his wild, bulbous hairdo as his soccer skills), and is the first game to include all 12 MLS teams with completely updated rosters, MLS rules and playoff system. If international soccer is more to your taste, that's covered too, with 53 international teams and five different tournaments.

The only sore spots I could find in the game are in the audio department. When kicking the ball hard, it sounds like the kicking of a cardboard box, and the crowd cheering background sound effect is a continuous, monotonous stream that becomes annoying after a while. Also on the audio front, Bob Ley's comments tend to get repetitive.

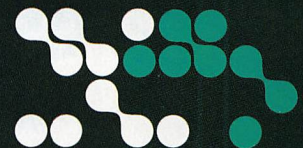
But overall, ESPN MLS GameNight is a well-balanced, easy-to-play game of video soccer. **GR**



ESPN MLS GAMENIGHT



by: pooch developer: saffire publisher: konami available: summer





NBA 2K1

BY TOM STRATTON

The longer I sat in front of my screen thinking about what I should focus on in my preview for NBA 2K1, the harder it became to decide on what was most important. If you remember my opinion from last year's effort, Visual Concepts had me giving up on all other basketball games, earning my undying respect and an A+ score.

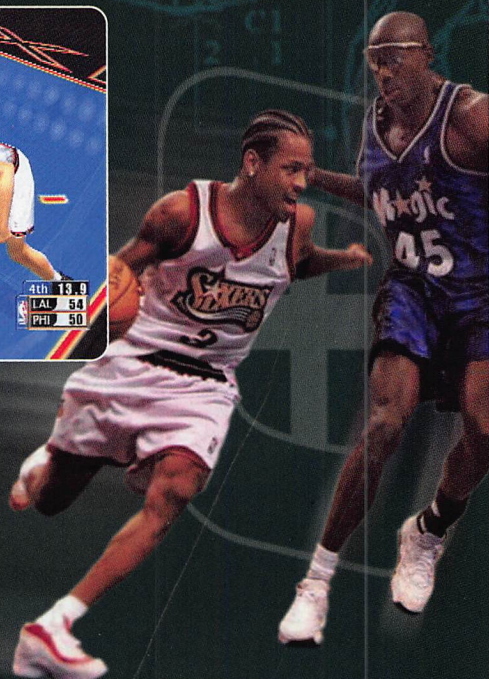
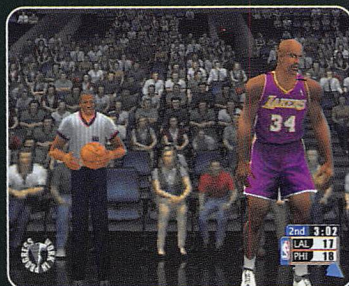
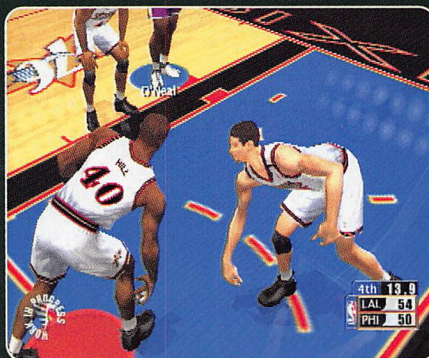
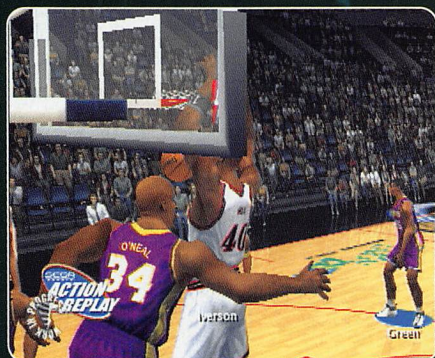
For a long time, I held back from scoring a game too high, knowing a sequel would soon follow and prove to be more of everything I loved in the original. In return, that sequel would deserve the higher of the two scores.

Well, in theory that philosophy works, but more often than not, sports games tend to suffer from trying to do too much, without enough hardware capabilities to effectively and efficiently pull off what the designers are trying to express. Now, after playing a focused game of NBA 2K1, I am finding myself trying to be nit-picky or convince my fellow editors there is such a thing as an A++ grade.

Forget the fact that the game also runs online, with up to eight people playing a single game or that there is a Franchise mode that can take a player through 30 trying seasons. Instead, marvel at the fact that the AI, the player models and the play mechanics have all gone through a noticeable upgrade.

The game allows you all manner of functionality, opening more control over a low-post drive. You can even press and hold the jump-and-swat button until the perfect moment, so that the rejection rockets the ball clear from the net with commanding authority. This addition, by the way, generates true adrenaline and ego-trippin'.

It's taken a solid year for Sega to build into online gaming and their delicate strategy of waiting until the games were ready will astonish fans of the Sega Sports line. Visual Concepts continues to innovate, while the others scramble to try and retaliate. **GR**



I consider Sega's Virtua Tennis an almost perfect sports game. It's simple enough for anyone to play yet deep enough for master gamers, it has a killer soundtrack (an unfortunate rarity among sports games), and, most importantly, it represents the tennis experience as religiously as a video game ever could. This is not only far and away the best tennis game ever created but one of the top sports titles in terms of pure addictive fun to appear in years. Remember those old games of 16-bit Madden? Virtua Tennis conjures a similar competitive spirit. All four surfaces are served up—grass, clay, carpet, and hard—and each plays accordingly, down to kicking up dust and leaving tracks on the clay, along with the speed of hard court, and the unpredictability of grass. Every possible mode is represented as well, including tournament, exhibition, and arcade, along with every possible multi-player configuration for up to four players. Serves can be manipulated by speed and placement via a fast-moving gauge, and once the action gets underway, shots can be manipulated by using the analog stick in conjunction with your stroke for imposing mind games upon a worthy opponent. The player's animation can only be described as perfect.

Unfortunately, only the men's draw is represented (hence the almost-perfect score) and the ranking is a bit off due to the game's age, having been ported directly after a run at the arcade. Jim Courier represents the top American—a fine player, but he's doing play-by-play at this year's Wimbledon. Sampras and Agassi are nowhere in sight. There are hidden

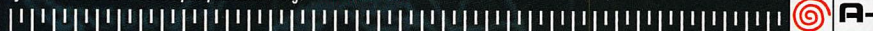


characters to open though, so I'm hopeful.

What I'd really wished for was the women's draw, but this would have meant lengthy delays due to licensing and reprogramming. Perhaps VT will find a big enough audience to justify a sequel such as Sega's football and basketball franchises have; the game certainly warrants it. Take notice of the crowd, for instance. From a distance it's apparent that this is the best-looking video-game sports crowd ever assembled, but the real surprise happens up close. From afar they're obviously flat, well animated sprites, yet up close during a replay they are fully polygonal. Sega actually took the time to render models for convincing closeups of the fans! Beginning with gorgeous graphics and following through to the intuitive, addictive play, Sega's VT is simply impossible to resist. This should begin another tennis invasion. Hey, maybe it can stop soccer at the same time! **GR**

VIRTUA TENNIS

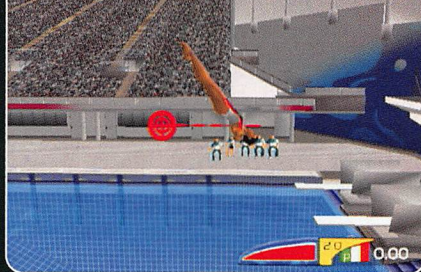
by: dave halverson developer/publisher: sega available: now



Eidos has secured from the International Olympic Committee the exclusive rights to produce the official video games based on the Olympic games for the next six years. The first effort is Sydney 2000 Summer Olympic Games, due out this August, and is shaping up to be an entertaining, well-rounded game. Historically, track and field and Olympic event video games have depended on frantic button pressing. Sydney 2000 follows that heritage, but also includes other events where the button pressing is all about timing and location.

In the version we received, there were only six events available for play: 100 meter sprint, triple jump, platform diving, super heavyweight weightlifting, skeet shooting and hammer throw. Some events, like the hammer throw and platform diving, are a bit more difficult to perfect than the others, but nothing a bit of practice won't help. The other six events are high jump, 110 meter hurdles, javelin, sprint cycling, kayak K1 slalom, and 100 meter freestyle swimming.

Of the four modes in the game (arcade, Olympic, head-to-head, coaching), the coolest is the single-player Olympic mode, where you take a character from each of the 12 events and train them well enough to win Olympic gold in the respective event.



There is a virtual gym where you can train your athletes (and practice your frenetic button pressing) on 20 different activities, including bench press, hurdle hops, pole climb, skipping, squats and treadmill.

The game will be optimized for non-split-screen, multiplayer competitions (in certain events), as up to four can play on the DC and up to eight on the PS. **GR**

SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPICS

by: pooh developer: atd publisher: eidos available: august



[publisher] sega
[genre] action platform
[system] saturn
[year] 1995



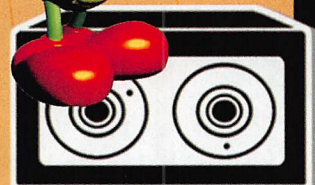
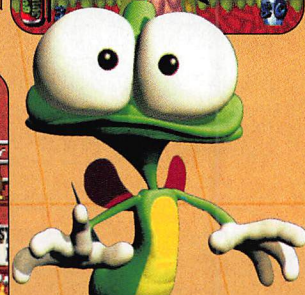
BUG!



The first game out of the 32-bit era (which ironically was ushered in by Sega) to combine 2D and 3D platforming amidst entirely polygonal worlds was Bug!. This was Sega of America's answer to Japan's Sonic as they rode the tidal wave the Genesis created during the early days of the short-lived U.S. Sega Saturn. Before Sony sucked the wind out of Sega's sails (and sales) by immediately embracing the Japanese market for their new PlayStation, Sega was trying to establish an identity all its own in the U.S., refusing to accept the fact that the true power of Sega was still being manufactured in Japan. Games like Bug! certainly were jewels, while others, like SCUD and Ghen War, were not, and the U.S. efforts alone just weren't enough, and a great console slipped away. Sega's dismissal of the burgeoning Japanese market, while Sony openly embraced it, would ultimately lead to the system's painful undoing. Amongst the rubble, however, there remains a wealth of Saturn software that doesn't simply hold up, but represents the tail end of the golden age of gaming. Now that 2D gameplay is all but gone, these games serve as a testament to what we deem as "the old school" and stand as a reminder of what action games are supposed to be all about—fun and, above all, challenge.

The gameplay in Bug! is simple: move left, right, and into the screen, head-bopping or spitting bug juice (if you've got it) at the enemies. The challenge lies in the execution; moving and crumbling platforms float precariously at every turn and the enemies all possess tricky patterns and defense mechanisms. Not to mention the fact that

timing and judging distances in 3D was a novel concept at the time. Realtime Associates tuned the game for seasoned 2D platform hounds—a stunt few even attempt these days. Genki tried it with Super Magnetic Neo and rookies came out of the woodwork complaining. Bah! As simplistic as Bug! is, you can't ever let your guard down, and the bosses are pure heaven—big, often hilarious, and above all, hard to kill. Graphically, this is one of those games that I will never tire of, joining the ranks of Panzer Dragoon, Astal, Guardian Heroes, Bug Too!, Clockwork Knight 1 & 2 and a plethora of obscure SS fare like Princess Crown, Rabbit, and Keio Yu Gekki. The sad moral of this story is that right now, SoA is making all the right moves, as Sony did in the last round, but much of the old Sega faithful seem frozen like deer in the headlights. I don't mean to bug you, but would you mind waking up? —DAVE HALVERSON



EXMIVES

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PERFECT DARK

Attaining Perfect Agent with the Perfect Agent

MISSION 1

dataDyne Central: Defection The first level on Perfect Agent difficulty seems to be a lot more difficult than the later missions, perhaps because you don't have much room to move around. Hiding and crouching is very useful, especially underneath the stairs.

1. Disable internal security hub Don't waste bullets on the first few guards; just punch them out. Remember to take out both wall cameras in the room with the fan. The level has enough enemies as it is.



2. Obtain keycode necklace This one's simple: just punch out Cassandra with the Disarm function, and for fun, punch out her secretary.

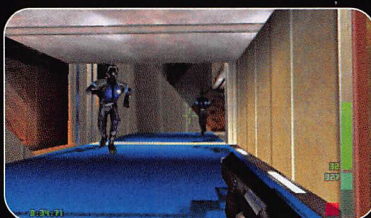
3. Download project file The key to this one is making sure you eliminate not only all the guards along the way from the computer to the executive's office beforehand, which is no small feat, but also the cameras on the walls that will alert them to your presence. Be ready to knock out the executive right after he says he's in, or else he'll gleefully set off an alarm.



4. Disable external comm hub While you're riding the elevator down, crouch down, which will make it so the shock troopers don't see you as you exit the lift. This makes it much easier to sit at the stop of the stairs and pick them off as they come to get you.



5. Gain entrance to laboratory Kill the guards in the hallway leading to the lab elevator before you take on the comms hub room, or else they'll hear the commotion and come at you from behind, wasting all the time you've spent.



dataDyne Central: Investigation The second level shouldn't present too much of a problem as long as you don't charge into a room without peeking around the corners first.

1. Holograph radio-active isotope If you run to the back of the room here, you'll find some proximity mines, helpful in the lab hallway with many guards.



2. Start security maintenance cycle Follow the little yellow bot into the maintenance area, and slowly pick off all the guards in the hallway you'll see on the right. If no guards have discovered you up to this point, use the computer in the alcove here to get double CMP150s.



3. Shut down experiments In a couple of the labs are guards on either side of the door, so be prepared. Also watch out for the sniveling scientist who tries to set off an alarm. Punch him out and shut down the computer yourself. Don't forget the K7 ammo nestled in the sides of the labs.



4. Obtain experimental technology These consist of the K7 Avenger carried by the shock trooper in one of the lab's basements, the Night Vision goggles in another lab, and the shield in the restricted area near the end of the level.

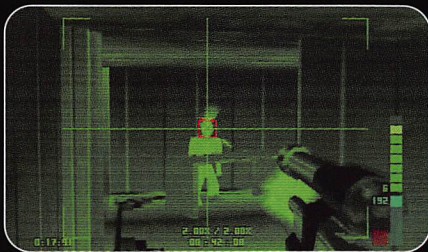


5. Locate Dr. Carol Use the K7's threat detector feature to locate the auto-guns located in one of the hallways. Also, while using the Data Uplink to enter Sector Four, be ready for the two guards who ambush you from behind.

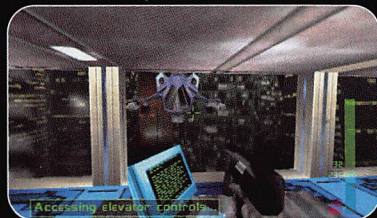


dataDyne Central: Extraction Another mission in the cramped vertical quarters of the dataDyne building. Watch for cameras on the walls, find safe corners to shoot from, and try to get through the first half without getting shot; it'll give you some breathing room towards the end, when you really need it. Conserve your ammo: a CMP150 can take down a bodyguard at long distance easier and faster than a shotgun.

1. Access foyer elevator Move slowly with Night Vision equipped and the guards won't know you're there (back away when you open the door in front of the second guard, too). You can take out every one with head shots before the lights turn on if you're good enough.



2. Reactive office elevator Be aware of where the hovercopter is at all times, and avoid it. You may have to sit somewhere and wait for it to go away, but time's on your side.



3. Destroy dataDyne hovercopter This will be ten times easier than using the CMP150 if you first go to Cassandra's floor and grab the rocket launcher. Aim well, though; you only have one shot. If you're worried about Dr. Carroll getting shot, just take him into an elevator, walk in, then walk out and send him for a ride.



4. Defeat Cassandra's bodyguard Shoot the guard closest to the fan while Cassandra is talking to you, then back up behind the wall. The guards are quick to shoot when you expose yourself, so hold down the R button and peek out to make them fire and reload, giving you time to take them out.



5. Rendezvous at helipad There's nothing standing between you and completing the mission now, so head upstairs to the helipad.



MISSION 2

Carrington Villa: Hostage One This is one of the best levels in the game. Ammunition is scarce, so don't discharge whole clips in firefights. It's best to take this mission on methodically, because the house is large and sprawling, and guards can come from many directions. You should know the layout of the house if you've made it to Perfect Agent difficulty anyway.

1. Eliminate rooftop snipers While clearing out the villa's interior, grab the sniper rifle in the shower, which should make the rest of this level a lot more bearable.



2. Activate wind generator Since the sniper rifle can get you through most of the rest of this mission, toss the laptop/sentry gun into the hallway where you switch on the generator itself, because there's a few too many guards to deal with at once.

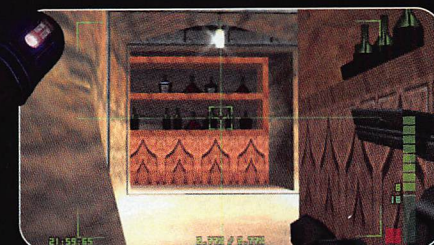
3. Locate and eliminate dataDyne hackers Know the layout of the villa, or you'll run out of time scrambling to find them, as they aren't in one room, but two. Blow up a computer and fail the mission.



4. Capture dataDyne guard This will be the first objective you fulfill if you just punch out the two bad guys in front of you at the beginning. Run to the house quickly, or the sniper on the roof will shoot at you.



5. Rescue Carrington The trip through the wine cellar is a piece of cake if you remember that there is a shock trooper behind almost every wine rack and every corner. Snipe them before they see you coming.



MISSION 3

Chicago: Stealth There is an obscene amount of dataDyne security on this level, as well as trench coat-wearing, Magnum-shooting CIA men who sound off the alarm, creating much chaos. There are lots of places to hide, though, so take advantage of it.

1. Retrieve drop point equipment There is a handy sewer tunnel at the end of the aqueduct to which you can retreat and pick off all attackers, not to mention reprogram the taxi that will take out the patrolling robot. Take your time - there are plenty of enemies to kill.

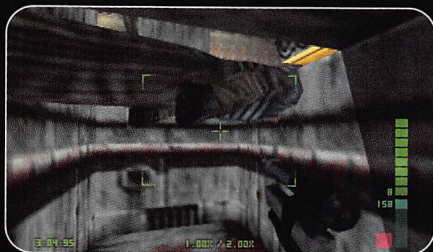
2. Attach tracer to limousine Make this the first objective you complete; just run straight out of the entry tunnel towards the limo and toss the tracer. If you wait to do this, the limo might leave and destroy your chances of completing the mission. And make sure the guy standing by the limo doesn't see you do this.



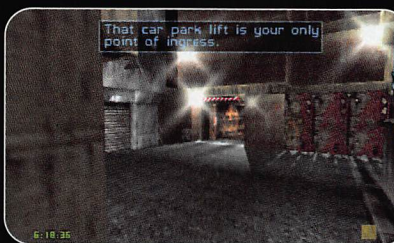
3. Prepare escape route Put the mine on the top fire escape door and you'll find a set of N-bombs there on the next mission. The consequence is that you have to run farther when you make the escape from the safe.



4. Create vehicular diversion If you do this from the sewer, there should be guards standing above the grating, so take them out from below before they get the easiest head shot they've ever had. The robot likes to pick you off here sometimes, too.

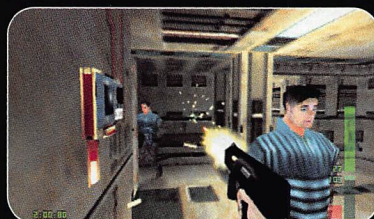


5. Gain entry to G5 building Wait a little bit after the taxi explodes, which will give the guards time to leave the exit area. You should be able to walk right in.



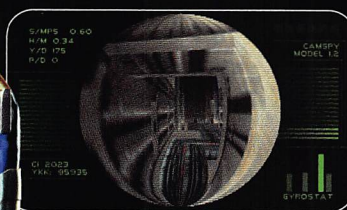
G5 Building: Investigation When you're on Perfect Agent and enemy fire takes off a chunk of health, the prospect of waiting an entire minute in the safe when guards come to get you is frightening. Again, conserve ammo like a madman, because you'll certainly need it in the safe.

1. Disable damping field generator While you're in the hallway right outside the starting room, look through the netting on the wall and pick off the four guards without a confrontation.



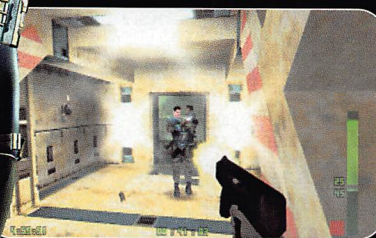
2. Deactivate laser grid system It is imperative you don't let the alarm go off on this level, or else you're in for a world of hurt: infinite bad guys and little ammo to fight them with.

3. Holograph meeting conspirators The only caveat here is not letting the CamSpy fall off the ledge down to the floor,

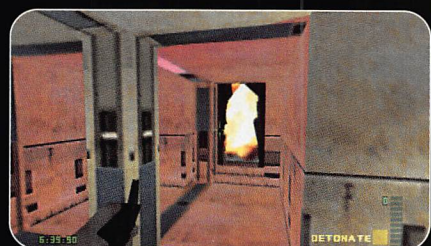


which will not only alert the guards, but could result in them blowing the device up.

4. Retrieve Dr. Carroll backup from safe Try to have as much ammo as possible before you enter, because you'll be accosted many times while you wait for the safe door to open. As soon as the time is up, clear the doorway, grab the backup, and make haste for the exit, running past any guard you see. Standing and fighting is a bad idea.



5. Exit building Depending on where you placed the mine on the last level, you'll have either a close or a far exit here.

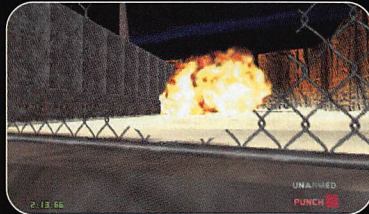


Remember to detonate the mine after you holograph the conspirators and before you exit, or you could get stuck in a corner with twelve guards on you.

MISSION 4

Area 51: Infiltration This one can make you very upset getting shot at the beginning, but if you wait for the cinema to play a few seconds, the guard will have walked past you by the time it cuts into gameplay. The rest involves a lot of running from cover to cover through wide open areas, getting fired upon the whole time. Exhilarating!

1. Shut down air intercept radar Don't go through the front doors, but instead take the safer mine field route, which you can make walkable by tossing a grenade or two into it, picking up a rocket launcher along the way. Also throw a grenade inside the guard tower to clear the sentries out.



2. Plant commo device on antenna Lots of guards here. Just keep your distance, not allowing them to stop and fire. Hug the wall and push the button at an awkward angle to lower the radar so the autogun doesn't nail you.



3. Disable all robot interceptors If you've dispatched all the enemies, this part is no problem at all. Just blow up the vehicles in the little cubicles on the far wall.

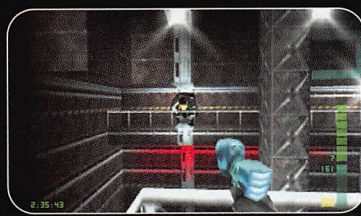


4. Gain access to hangar lift Be careful here, because the guards have Dragons, and the ones at the bottom of the lift throw grenades with abandon.



5. Make contact with CI spy Just stick to the walls and move slowly, and you should be able to take out all the guards along the way to the door that Jonathan is behind.

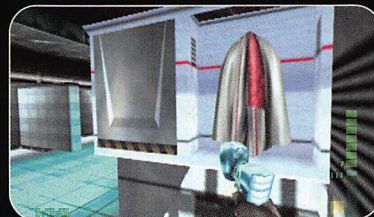
Area 51: Rescue This level can drive you insane if you don't make sure to cover your bases and take out every guard and scientist systematically. They love to sneak up on you.



1. Destroy computer records On the second floor of the cargo bay is a lone sentry guarding a locked door. Occasionally the door will open, sometimes by shooting it, other times if you follow a

wounded guard retreating through it. If you manage to get to the other side, look around a bit and you'll be rewarded with a Phoenix, whose explosive rounds even the odds considerably. Before you destroy the computer with the records on it, use the Data Uplink to shut off the lights, then on another computer to mess up the door controls.

2. Locate conspiracy evidence Again, make sure no guards sneak up on you while you're X-ray-ing the dead Maian.



3. Obtain and use lab technician disguise Check the compartments on the wall near where you kill the man in the showers. It's in a random place every time.

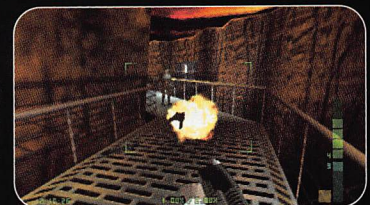
4. Gain access to autopsy lab When you walk into the lab area, watch out for assailants on either side of the door.



5. Rescue the crash survivor Don't worry about the scientists, just walk into the lab and the mission is accomplished.

Area 51: Escape By this point, it seems like you've been in this base forever. Your best bet at winning here is grabbing an enemy's SuperDragon and using its grenade launcher feature to take them out en masse.

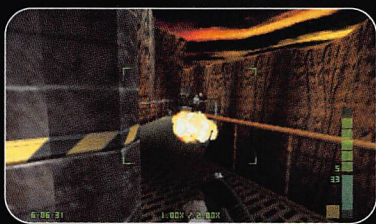
1. Locate alien tech medpack This is in the same place you found the shield on Agent and Special Agent. If you take out the guards along the way with the grenade launcher, you should knock out the intrusive lights on the catwalk.



2. Rendezvous with CI spy As soon as you leave this area, agents will flow out from behind you, making the grenade launcher quite valuable, being able to sunder your foes in one shot. Jonathan will clean up any stragglers with his magnum.



3. Locate secret hangar Guards will attempt to cross the catwalk and go into the room where Jonathan places the explosives, so stand there and launch grenades at them. You can also pile explosive canisters near the doors earlier in the level to impede the enemy and also blow them up easier.



4. Revive Maian Bodyguard More guards will come at you from the area you came from, so be prepared. It's even more important that you protect Elvis, because his big head can get you into trouble. Jonathan gets himself into danger, too.



5. Escape from Area 51 Don't even hang around to hear the whole Jonathan/Elvis conversation. Just head to the hangar door computers and wait for the music to change, then switch them on. The level will end, and you won't even have to bother taking the hoverbike out.



MISSION 5

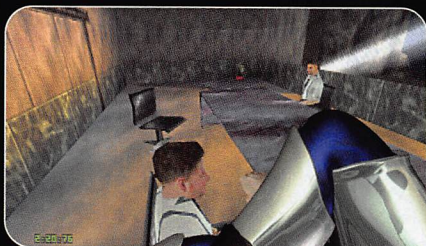
Air Base: Espionage The most difficult segment of this mission is after you complete the third objective when you get stormed by NSA agents. The rest of it should be fairly easy to pull off.

1. Obtain disguise and enter base At the beginning, use your DrugSpy to draw out the guard near the alarm and put him under. Fly the DrugSpy back to your location while the other guards tend to their fallen comrade, setting them up for easy shots from your crossbow.

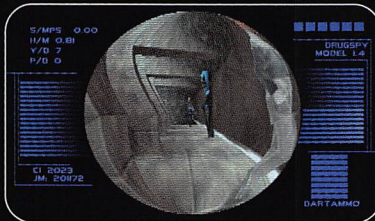


2. Check in equipment

As long as you don't let the two guys at the top of the elevator get by you, this should not present any kind of problem.



3. Subvert security monitoring system Before you do this, use the DrugSpy and crossbow to take out all guards who will come for you once the alarm rings. Also, plant proximity mines on the pillars and corners they like to hide in, so you can save bullets making your escape.

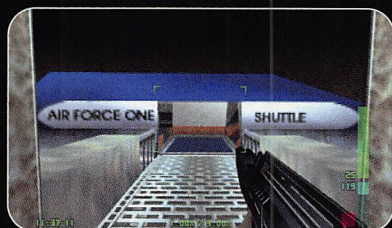


4. Obtain flight plans from safe Once you're here, you're pretty much in the clear, but be ready to take down a couple of NSA agents here and there. To get to the safe, just shoot the mine that's on the door, which will blow up the window, allowing for an entrance.



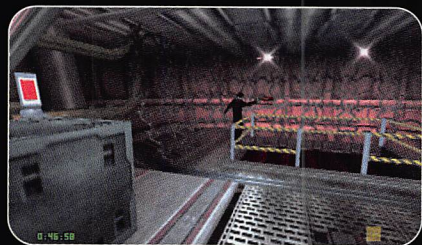
5. Board Air Force One

One Take the elevator in the hallway outside the safe room. When it gets to the bottom, wait for the door to close again, and it will take you up to an area right outside where you need to go, saving you the trouble of an uphill firefight.

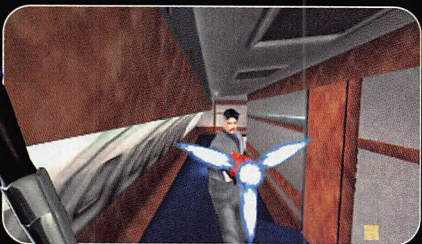


Air Force One: Antiterrorism The best way to go through this level is fast. The longer you take, the more guards will pop out of the hatch and attack you from behind.

1. Locate and retrieve equipment Don't hurt anyone on your way to the cargo room; they'll help take down the terrorists when they board the plane. If you push the button in the room with the hoverbike, it will be available on the next mission. Take the dumbwaiter up to the main floor because it saves lots of time and trouble.



2. Locate President Punch out the guard in front of the president's door to get his Cyclone. When you exit the room, go down the ramp and kill the terrorists near the front of the plane, and then make your way to the back. This prevents annoying back attacks when you're almost at the stairs to the escape pod.



3. Get President to escape capsule The president, although incredibly stupid, can still take a lot of bullets to the chest, but that doesn't mean he's invincible. Don't let him go into a room before you do.



4. Secure Air Force One flight path This is actually the last thing you have to do, because the game won't let you do it before detaching the UFO. There are only a few terrorists near the cockpit section, so it shouldn't be a problem. After this, the mission's done.



5. Detach UFO from Air Force One Simply place a mine in the hatch that opens up after you complete the second objective. To prevent all back attacks at the cost of ammo, leave a sentry gun here.

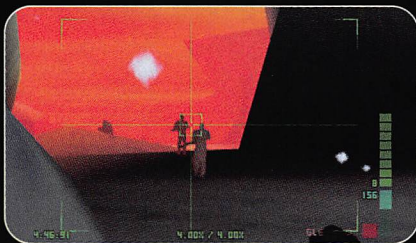


Crash Site: Confrontation The Alaskan wilderness is extremely spread out, meaning that if you shoot a guard in one place, there's a strong chance that one in another place will hear this and come to get you. Sniping is a must, and it's fun to boot. If you're fairly methodical, you have a strong advantage.

1. Retrieve Presidential medical scanner After you activate the distress beacon, head towards the crashed plane and snipe out the three guards around it and pick up the scanner.



2. Activate distress beacon When you've rescued the president, go back to the cave and out of the more open entrance. Kill the guards who come to you and hug the right wall until you can snipe with ease. Remember, the sniper rifle's second function is a crouch, which steadies the shot.



3. Shut down enemy jamming device This ship is defended by autoguns, which you can take out with the sniper rifle, only being able to see the corners of them. Bait the guards into following back to an ambush, and then use mines to blow up the ship.



4. Retire Presidential clone He's hiding in the caves, and starts running as soon as you start a commotion there. Since you'll probably have night vision on, just kill the guy who's running really fast. Mission accomplished.

5. Locate and rescue President Make this your first objective, by turning around at the start, taking out the three guards, and meeting up with Elvis. Go towards the wall and find a hole from which you can rescue the president. To take out the drones, use your remote and proximity mines. Watch out for the guard who likes to sneak up on you here.



MISSION 9

Pelagic II: Exploration Of all the missions in the game, this one probably has the highest body count, so you really need to be on your toes, conserving your health and ammo. It can get on your nerves with all the guards sounding off alarms, so know the level well enough to plan your attack and prevent this from happening.

1. Disable primary power source The most valuable technique here is to shoot guards through windows, because they can't shoot back. It also allows for easy head shots. Remember to disable the two cameras in the power room.



2. Secure laboratories and research data This part is pretty easy as long as you don't let the scientists alert any guards. Also be aware of a camera pointing directly at you in the yellow hallway on the way to the labs.



3. Deactivate GPS and autopilot There are three officers here. Two will help you, and one will try to kill them for being traitors. Keep all three in view, and get ready to knock that sour apple out.



4. Activate Moon Pool lift

At the bottom of the stairs is a door on the left. Enter, head right, and you'll get to a room full of water. Move left, activate the "B" switch, and then go through the now-unlocked door, down the ramp, and hit another "B" switch.



5. Rendezvous and escape with Elvis

Before you do this, kill every single enemy on the ship. This way there's no chance of Elvis dying. Just follow him to the end. Remember he's in a different place from where he was on Agent difficulty.

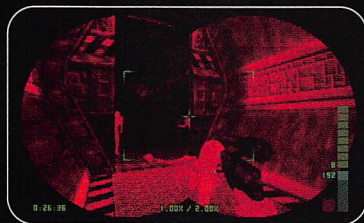


Deep Sea: Nullify Threat

Elvis can be either a big help or a big hindrance, depending on the game's mood. When you get this far into the game, it actually starts to get easier, because the levels are more streamlined and straightforward.

1. Reactivate teleports

Let Elvis do all the work. If you see an enemy, back up and let your little alien friend zap him with the FarSight. You may have to help him out a bit, but generally he'll mop up all the opposition if you let him.



2. Disable Cetan megaweapon

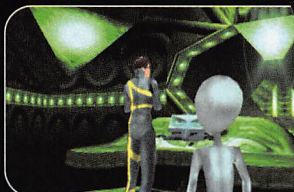
Those Skedar are pesky as hell, but you have an advantage: the FarSight gun. Hold down the R button to kill as many of them as you can through walls. You can even destroy the megaweapon in this manner.



3. Secure control room

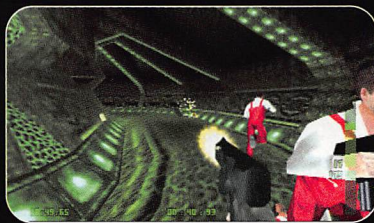
You can kill at least one of the two blondies in the control room with the FarSight. Also, beware the alien autoguns in the hallways and in one of the big rooms. They are powerful, and sometimes kill Elvis.

4. Restore Dr. Carroll's personality All you have to do is use the backup disk in your start button inventory, and you're set.



5. Escape from the Cetan ship

Simply exit the room, turn right through the door, and go back to the start of the level, ignoring all enemies you see, or at most shooting them as you run by. They shouldn't give you too much trouble.



MISSION

Carrington Institute: Defense

You definitely have to have a good game plan combined with quick shooting skills to succeed at this mission. It's short, but you'll probably have to repeat it several times to nail it down.

1. Reactivate automatic defenses

Time is of the essence. Immediately turn around at the beginning and go down the ramp to the helipad. Go straight through the doorways and turn off the first gun you see, spinning around quickly and keeping straight down that hall. Go through the door, veering left, and you'll come to another gun. Turn that on and go around the corner from the panel down the hall. If there's a guard here, gun him down easily, then curve around the chasm to the last gun. This should take about 45 seconds. Just remember you're making a counterclockwise loop.



2. Release hostages

In the holo-room, quickly turn around the wall and get all the enemies in a line and open fire, taking them all down with one clip. Upstairs, don't let any hostages die and you'll get the Devastator. Use the boosts if you need to.



3. Retrieve experimental weapon

Since it takes extra time to destroy the information, your opponents have more time to get to you. Get into the target range as quickly as possible, and when you get the RC-P120, go around the wall and turn on cloaking. Head down to the helipad again.



4. Destroy sensitive information

Do this while you're still upstairs. Just launch a grenade at the safe on the wall in Carrington's office.





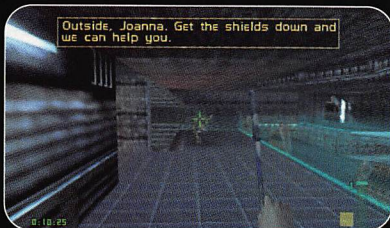
5. Deactivate bomb If you've done it right, there shouldn't be any enemies around the ship. Just use the Data Uplink, then head back to the hangar and the mission is done.

MISSION 8

Attack Ship: Covert Assault You can get through this mission without even getting hit, because for the majority of it, the enemies attack you one at a time, and wait behind doors.

1. Disable shield system Use the combat knife's poison feature on the first Skedar you see, then run

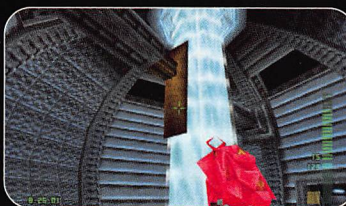
back to your cell to hide, because it takes a little while to die. Use single ammo shots on the shields - no sense in wasting precious Mauler bursts.



2. Open hangar doors Charge up the Mauler to take out the Skedar in one shot. But don't miss - this early in the level, you just can't afford the wasted ammo. Open the hangar doors by going to the ramp opposite

where you came from and use the console there on the left.

3. Access navigational system When the Maians arrive, let them take out all the Skedar that come out of the large doors. And if you want to, you can kill the Maians to get a Callisto NTG and 20 ammo. It won't do you much good, though. Again, just keep your Mauler charged and you can eliminate all the Skedar on the upper floors with ease.



4. Sabotage engine system Blow up the panels on the big Star Wars-esque energy core and beat feet back to the foyer in that area, lest you get caught in the ensuing explosion like a hapless TIE Fighter.

5. Gain control of bridge Use peeking and crouching to remove the Skedar on the bridge, and then go into the room fairly deeply. Aim at the elevator doors and use the quick-firing AR-34 to dispatch the numerous Skedar that come out. They'll probably attack gung-ho Elvis, leaving you to just sit there and snipe.



MISSION 9

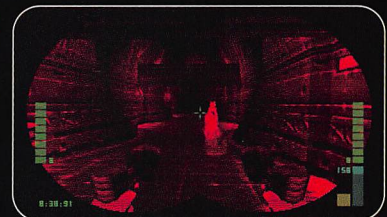
Skedar Ruins: Battle Shrine It's amazing how easy the last level of the game is, considering how damnably difficult the rest of it is. Since you've beaten it by now on Agent and Special Agent, you should be able to do this on the first try.

1. Identify temple targets If you haven't discovered this by now, destroy all the temple's obelisks, and not just the ones you're required to. You'll be rewarded with a double Phoenix and plenty of ammo, making this mission a real cakewalk. The Callisto will suffice until you get the good stuff.

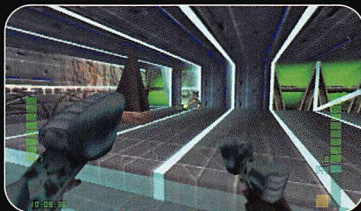


2. Activate bridge The Phoenix's explosive shots will take out the Skedar in one blast, so just point and shoot.

3. Gain access to Inner Sanctum This shouldn't even be an objective, considering you do this anyway on the previous two difficulties.

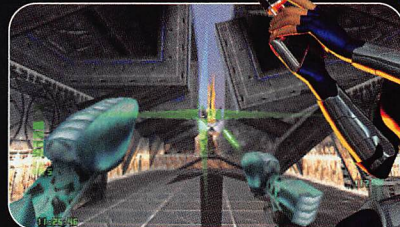


4. Destroy secret Skedar army Again, do what you did before. They come out in the same pattern every time, which you should know by now. Just take them out with the Phoenix, one at a time, with one or two blasts.



5. Assassinate Skedar leader

As long as you don't take a Slayer to the face, this guy shouldn't present a problem. You'll likely blow up rockets in his face, making it easier for him to recharge and give you a chance to blow up the pieces of the symbol structure above him. Be aware if he spawns a Skedar, and this confrontation should come off without a hitch. Beat this, and you get the Perfect Dark difficulty, which lets you set the enemy's health, damage, and accuracy on every level.



WORLD REPUBLIC

[i] Well, another bad month for PS2 games. The atrocious Hresvelgr brings futuristic racing to a new low, and Square's All Star Pro-Wrestling and Artdink's Buchikire Kongou don't fare much better. At least TVDJ is fun. Plus, be sure to check out Famitsu DC editor in chief Koji Aizawa's take on Capcom's Eldorado Gate and our look at Sorcerous Stabber Orphen.



World Republic Preview • developer **shade co.** • publisher **kadokawa esp** • available in japan **august**

sorcerous stabber orphen



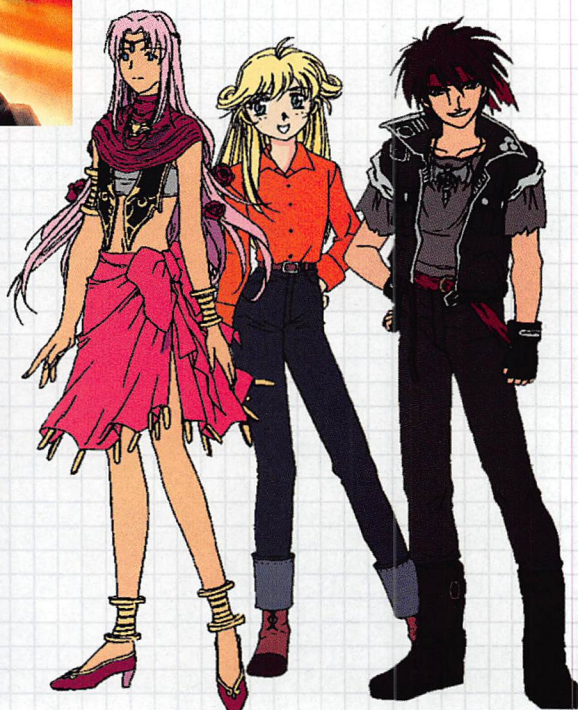
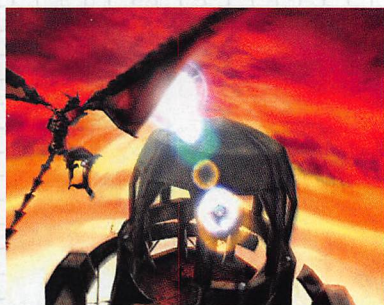
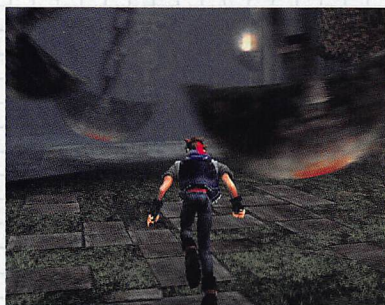
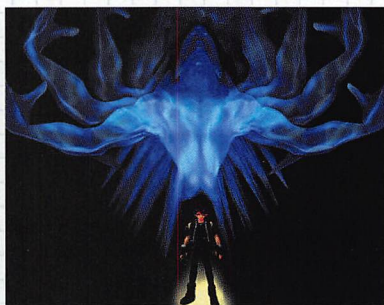
Sorcerous Stabber Orphen is an upcoming action RPG from Kadokawa/ESP for PlayStation 2. Orphen was originally a novel and TV animation series in which the main character, Orphen, who is a dark wizard, explores various worlds. Although this sounds like it would revolve around fantasy worlds, it is, in fact, a mixture of fantasy and modern elements. Orphen wears a leather jacket, T-shirt, jeans, boots, and his red bandana instead of a robe, as a wizard in a normal fantasy RPG would be portrayed.

Now let's explore the game itself. It's a typical action RPG in which

you control Orphen (or other characters, depending on the stage you're in) as you explore fully 3D polygonal worlds, much like Tomb Raider. The game's story consists of three parts, and is written specifically for this game. After the opening movie, you choose your main character, and the order of the stories you will play is decided depending on which character you choose. Everything onscreen is polygonal, and you will use your sword and magic to defeat enemies. There are some important plots in the game, and at certain points, beautifully animated movies using the PS2's full capabilities are shown.

Especially spectacular in this game are the battles with boss characters. These bosses have individual characteristics and battle styles, and the battles with them really show off the PS2's graphic effects power. The basis of battle is to use magic to attack, and then defend against the enemy's attack. When the enemy gets in close range, using the sword is better. There are also environmental differences in each boss battle. For example, in some battles you may have to jump to safer ground, as the ground beneath your feet drops away.

We haven't been able to play this game yet, so this is all we know up to now. But read our interview with Koji Yokota, president of Shade Co., who is developing Orphen, and wait for the U.S. release from Activision. **-T. MIURA**



World Republic Interview • developer shade co. • publisher kadokawa esp • available in japan august

KOJI YOKOTA interview



Established in 1995 and previously responsible for the development of Y's III, Soul Blader, Dragon Quest V, Granstream Saga and Brightis, Shade Co. Ltd. is currently deep in the development of Orphen for the PS2. We spoke with Koji Yokota, President of Shade about Orphen.

GR: IS ORPHEN FOR PS2 BASED MORE ON THE TV ANIMATION OR THE NOVEL SERIES WRITTEN BY YOSHINOBU AKITA?

KY: Well, although the characters and the world of the game are basically based on the animation, we began writing new scenarios once we came up with the game system.

GR: ARE THE BACKGROUNDS OF THE GAME STILL IMAGES, OR IS THE ENTIRE GAME POLYGONAL?

KY: All images, including the characters, backgrounds, etc. are drawn in polygons, and real-time processing blurs the distant view.

GR: HOW'S THE DIFFICULTY OF THE GAME? WILL IT BE EASY FOR BEGINNERS TO PLAY, OR IS THE GAME TARGETED SPECIFICALLY AT ORPHEN FANS?

KY: The game action obviously puts up more of a challenge as the player progresses, but we also thought up various devices to attract people who don't know Orphen and would not consider themselves Orphen fans.

GR: BETWEEN THE GAME SYSTEM AND QUALITY OF GRAPHICS, WHICH DO YOU THINK IS MORE IMPORTANT?

KY: Although all the elements are important, our focus in Orphen was on the game system.

GR: WILL THE BATTLE SYSTEM BE TURN-BASED OR CAN PLAYERS ATTACK THE ENEMY AT WILL?

KY: Basically, the battle system is real time, but when you want to change your battle target or want to know the enemy's status, you can freeze time in the target selection screen. We call this battle system, which was adapted from the tactical portion of RPGs and simulation games, the TTL (Tactical Target Lock) System.

GR: WHAT WERE THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECT YOU ENCOUNTERED IN DEVELOPING ORPHEN?

KY: One was to manage the huge amount of data in the game, and the other was trying to achieve the graphic quality that people expect to see from PS2.

GR: IT IS NOW KNOWN TO BE VERY DIFFICULT TO DEVELOP GAMES FOR PS2, AND THE USE OF MIDDLEWARE TO SPEED DEVELOPMENT ALMOST SEEMS A NECESSITY. DID YOU UTILIZE ANY MIDDLEWARE, OR DID YOU HAVE TO USE YOUR OWN LIBRARY?

KY: We've used our original 3D tools and 3D engine, which simulates a PS2 on a PC. We haven't used any other company's middleware since they do not provide any merits, and it is hard to adapt game design using middle ware. There is also a lack of reliability.

GR: WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR CHOOSING DVD-ROM AS THE MEDIA FOR ORPHEN?

KY: We chose DVD because of its loading speed and stability, and the fact that it can contain a huge data amount on one disk. Since the beginning of development, we have tried to use all the advantages of the PS2.

GR: ARE YOU PLANNING A SEQUEL YET?

KY: We do not have any plans now. I think it all depends on gamers' opinions.

GR: WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ON THE GAME, DID YOU THINK ABOUT RELEASING IT IN THE U.S.?

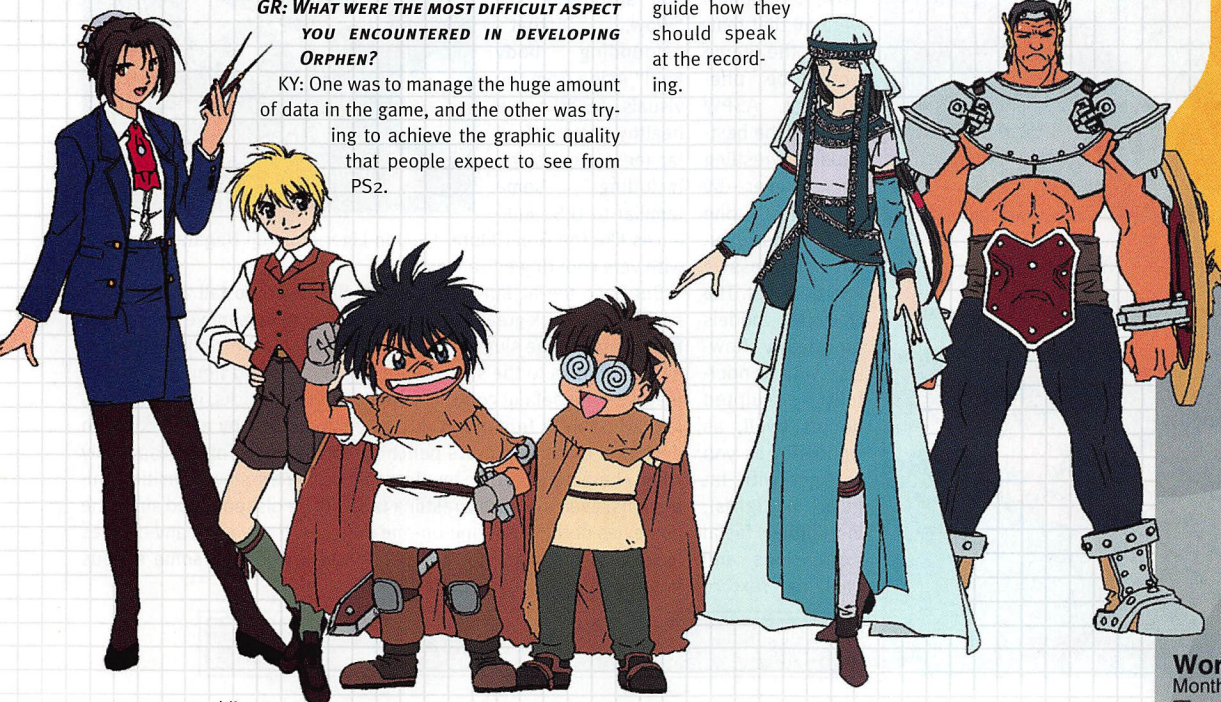
KY: Since the first stages of planning, we have been considering both European and U.S. markets. Our products always have a worldwide targeting concept.

GR: HOW WILL THE U.S. VERSION AND JAPANESE VERSIONS BE DIFFERENT?

KY: The difficulty will be adjusted. We are also planning to put extra elements into the game.

GR: EXCEPT FOR METAL GEAR SOLID, MOST U.S. VOICE-OVERS ARE VERY POORLY RECEIVED. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS AS A GAME CREATOR? DO YOU THINK IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE GOOD VOICE ACTORS AND ACTRESSES IN THE GAME FOR THE U.S. VERSION, TOO?

KY: We leave this matter entirely up to Activision as our U.S. version publisher. I think it will be no problem if we can check the U.S. actress' voice and acting skills at a casting audition, and guide how they should speak at the recording.



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Gamers' Republic





World Republic Preview • developer data east/crea pech • publisher ascii corp. • available in japan sum-

metal max: wild eyes

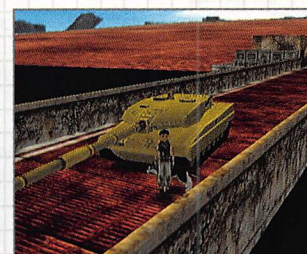
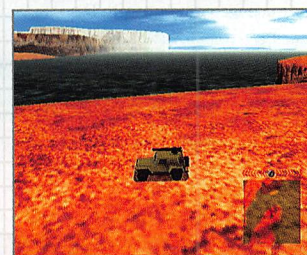
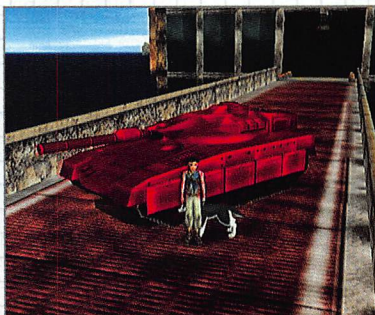


Metal Max was an RPG featuring various military weapons that could be customized, and was first released for the Famicom in 1991, followed by MM2 and MM Returns for SNES. Now the game is coming to Dreamcast and, of course, the graphics have been changed dramatically from the 2D NES version, although the main concept of the game remains the same. The Dreamcast version is titled Metal Max: Wild Eyes, and the story takes place after a legendary disaster when the huge electrical brain NOA created monsters. The people who had survived this disaster lived with the fear of monsters and formed a group called Rang.

The main character of Metal Max, whose home town was destroyed by Rang, then became a slave. He tried to escape with a beautiful girl, Lain, but he was thrown out to sea. After a successful escape, he became a monster hunter, and began to explore with his party, consisting of Leroy (a mechanic who loves machines and women), Ratoya (a female soldier), and Pochi (a dog with a surgically altered brain).

Although there is a story line in this game as in other RPGs, you can basically explore freely anywhere on the map so that you do not have to play the game in a linear fashion. The same goes for monster battles. It won't be necessary to battle with larger and larger monsters leading up to a boss character. But there will be valuable prize money for fighting the stronger monsters, and with this money, you can buy stronger weapons or tanks, or you can buy presents for your girlfriend! Yes, you will have a chance to choose a girlfriend from three to four girls during your adventure.

Metal Max: Wild Eyes is due this summer, and is surely one of the more enticing titles among the Dreamcast RPG rush on the way. **-J. SAHAI**



World Republic Review • developer/publisher squaresoft • available in japan now

all star pro-wrestling

PS2

Squaresoft and pro wrestling. You might think that the two wouldn't really be the best match for each other. And sadly, you'd be right. On the surface, All Star Pro-Wrestling looks like a decent game—



heck, if graphics were all that mattered, the game would be phenomenal. ASPW isn't just the best-looking wrestling game ever—but by far—but it's one of the most visually impressive PS2 titles yet. The character models are nearly flawless, with wonderfully sculpted bodies (well, as wonderful as you can get with fat guys in tights), incredible facial expressions and amazing texture

work. This is probably the only game ever that can make you stop and say, "Wow, that's astounding body hair!" Aside from the visuals, ASPW has a healthy roster of 26 Japanese superstars, including some familiar to U.S. audiences like the Great Muta, Jyushin Liger and Yuji Nagata, complete with very cool ring entrances.

But once the action starts, the game begins to fall apart. While some moves look great, half the time the wrestlers move like robots. Even worse is the sluggish control. Executing even simple moves is a chore thanks to the slow response and awkward timing. Trying to play with the default controls (use both analog sticks, no buttons) is just a lesson in frustration. It's all compounded by awful collision detection that has players punching through each other, especially when characters become invulnerable during the slow transition animations. Even die-hard wrestling fans will be disappointed since the game has nothing but one-on-one matches. If any company decides to localize this game for a U.S. release, it will need some serious improvements. **-C. HOFFMAN**



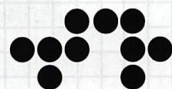
World Republic says "Looks great, but filled with problems like poor control and bad hit detection. Wrestling fans should look elsewhere for their fix."



World Republic Review • developer/publisher **artdink** • available in japan now

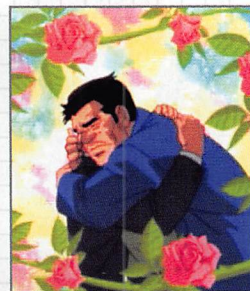
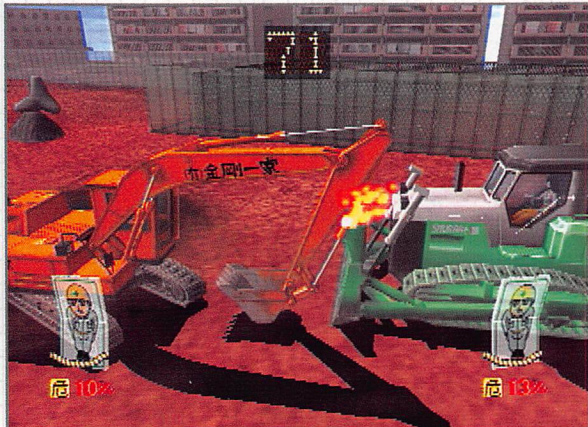
buchikire kongou

PS2



With games like Buchikire Kongou coming to the PlayStation 2, I really have to wonder about the system's future. A construction vehicle-fighting game? I'll give Artdink props for making something unique, but there's a reason it hasn't been done before. Buchikare

Kongou is something like a horribly sluggish Twisted Metal, but with no interesting characters, rather small arenas and only one special attack per vehicle. The machines handle like dead whales and have about as many moves, too. Incidentally, the title roughly translates to "Pissed Off Kongou"—appropriate, considering how you'll feel after playing this game. **-C. HOFFMAN**



World Republic says "Horribly sluggish and a chore to play, Buchikire Kongou takes a strange idea and turns it into one miserable game."

D-World Republic Review • developer/publisher **gust** • available in japan now

hresvelgr

PS2

I carried no expectations with me when I first booted up Hresvelgr. The developer, Gust, was unknown to me at the time, and after hearing all the horror stories about how difficult the PS2 is to develop for, I really had no hopes for

this game. Deep down, I was probably holding on to the faint notion that this could be the futuristic racer to tide me over until Wipeout Fusion, but I never let such thoughts make it all the way to the surface, or even to fully form. As it turns out, this was a very wise frame of mind to be in. For you see, Hresvelgr is horrible, a disgrace to Sony's beautifully styled hardware.

What's that you're saying to yourself? The shots don't look too bad? Look at them again and imagine that they are running at less than 30 frames per second at all times. I thought that visually taxing PS2 games would run at 30, while the rest could manage 60, but this thing can't even crack 15 half the time. Even worse, the architecture is basic, the textures lackluster, and the control and concept don't even warrant discussion. Yes, what we have here is the second really, really bad PS2 game, after Sky Surfer, and further proof that developers without deep pockets, modest concepts, or cutting edge talent should stay well away from Sony's new machine. **-M. HOBBS**



World Republic says "Any solid designs the game may have are buried in the unexplainably poor frame rate."

D

3X3 EYES

Double Cassette VHS Release
English Dubbed and Subtitled
Immortals (V.1) - August 2000
The Demon Seal (V.2) - October
2000
Bilingual DVD Box Set -
December 2000



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August Releases

Amazing Nurse Nanako - Memories of You V.1	DVD	\$29.98
Amazing Nurse Nanako - Memories of You V.1	VHS-Dub	\$24.98
Amazing Nurse Nanako - Memories of You V.1	VHS-Sub	\$24.98
Fushigi Yugi - The Fading Light V.15	VHS-Dub	\$24.98
Fushigi Yugi - The Fading Light V.15	VHS-Sub	\$24.98
Key the Metal Idol V.1	DVD	\$29.98
Nazca - Eternal Power V.4	DVD	\$29.98
Nazca - Eternal Power V.4	VHS-Dub	\$24.98
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Pokemon - The Final Badge V.20	VHS-Dub	\$14.98
Tenchi Universe - On Earth III V.2	DVD	\$29.98
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Trigun - Wolfwood V.3	VHS-Dub	\$24.98
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September Releases

3x3 Eyes - Immortals V.1	VHS-Dub	\$34.98
3x3 Eyes - Immortals V.1	VHS-Sub	\$34.98
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Key the Metal Idol V.2	DVD	\$29.98
Milly - Milly at the Zoo V.2	VHS-Dub	\$12.98
Sol Bianca - The Legacy: Separation V.2	DVD	\$29.98
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*Poor Yakumo - No one
chooses "Zombie"
for their career
goal . . .*



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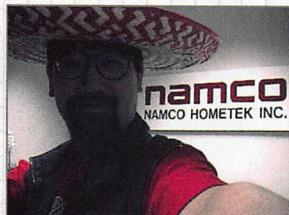
3X3 EYES

World Republic Famitsu Connection • position dreamcast chief editor • publisher famitsu

FAMITSU'S KOJI AIZAWA



Koji Aizawa, chief editor of Japan's Famitsu DC, talks about Capcom's intriguing new idea for a serialized game. What is the bimonthly RPG Eldorado Gate going to be?



I've been pondering the notion of a monthly or bimonthly RPG like Capcom's forthcoming Eldorado Gate for quite some time. Why, I wondered, couldn't there be an RPG which is continuously updated at short intervals and sold cheap, like magazines or comics? Capcom must

have been reading my thoughts. Eldorado Gate is just such an idea—a serialized, bimonthly RPG consisting of 24 volumes, each made up of three chapters. Not surprisingly, this is a huge project, and on its bimonthly release schedule, the entire series will span 48 months! My question is, what motivated Capcom to try this?

As a player, I reckon that some people do not have time to play RPGs that take 50 to 100 hours to complete; some would rather be satisfied by simple play and heartfelt stories, like those that dominated the SNES era, rather than by complex battle systems and CG scenes.

From the perspective of Capcom, the merits of this game are the dispersion of extreme game production costs and stable sales from a long string of sequels. And as we've seen with some PC titles, when the game system is excellent, people can continually enjoy the same game simply by adding new scenarios or expansion packs.

I like the concept, in part because one does not have to play all the individual stories of Eldorado Gate (one can pick up and play from any point in the



series, similar to a TV drama like *X-Files*). So even though all the pieces of the story fit together, each volume is self-contained. Capcom will prepare various worlds, themes, and characters so that one can choose scenarios to play at will. Of course, you can play all the chapters in sequence, as I'm sure Capcom would like you to do,

but there won't be the experience of character status or the concept of levelling up since we can start from any story. People will continue to play since there would be fun in the collection of items and weapons, similar to the addiction of Pokémon or the cards of Magic: The Gathering.

Well, I don't know how this huge project will ultimately be received, or how fun the game will be, but personally, I am looking most forward to seeing Eldorado Gate's vast cast of characters, which have been designed by Final Fantasy illustrator Yoshitaka Amano, who happens to live in New York now. Whatever, I'll keep my eye on this new and exciting undertaking from Capcom. **-H. AIZAWA**



Dreamcast Review

SAKURA WARS
GAME BY SEGA

Sakura Wars for DC is based on one of the greatest Saturn games never to cross the pond to the U.S. Set in the year 1919 in Tokyo, the story follows the building of a defense force using newly developed mobile suits to defend the Earth against Demon forces.

For the DC version, the scenario and simulation parts are straight from the SS version, but the entire game is beefed up graphically thanks to Sega's Soft 7 team, who also worked on the original version. Images were re-rendered to be suitable for DC, movies were digitally remastered, and effects in battles were created in a completely new style.

With the combination of great animation, simulation, RPG elements, and a friendlier interface, the game will surely attract those who like the animation and game style. The play, however, is somewhat mundane—interact with characters, engage in a mission, and then play a turn-based battle. Although the gameplay is simple, it is still refreshing to re-encounter newly made classics like this one. **-J. SAKAI C+**



World Republic Review • developer/publisher sony • available in japan now

TVDJ



In the same way that games as disparate as Puzzle Bobble and Baku Baku owe their existence to Tetris, so does Sony's new PS2 game TVDJ owe its life to games like Beatmania. At its core, TVDJ is a music/timing game, but with a twist (naturally). The key to the twist is the concept of addition, wherein you've got eight blocks to fill in with various video clips of one, two, three, and four block lengths. Timing is obviously key, and by adding up the clips to proper sums, while sometimes having to hit specific patterns, you string together a little movie that advances the plot.

If that sounds a bit confusing, well, it is at first, but one can quickly get the hang of it. To help matters along, there is TVDJ's great visual style of the nouveau, hand-drawn 3D style, and the most wacked-out story this side of Parappa.

Thus far, Sony has made no mention of the game in its U.S. plans, but considering that the even stranger Parappa found its way over, there's no reason TVDJ couldn't also make it.

-M. HOBBS

World Republic says "As its name implies, TVDJ has you mixing and matching video clips. Fun and attractive"



"Ninja Girl Power!"

- Animerica



It is said that whoever obtains the "Lovely Eyepatch" will inherit the swordsmanship and skills of one of Japan's greatest swordsmen, Jubei Yagyu. Enter Jiyu Nanohana, an ordinary eighth grade girl who just happens to meet the special "requirements" of the eyepatch. But dealing with lovesick classmates and dueling teachers, will the overly sweet and innocent Jiyu accept the responsibilities of being the successor of Jubei? What's a



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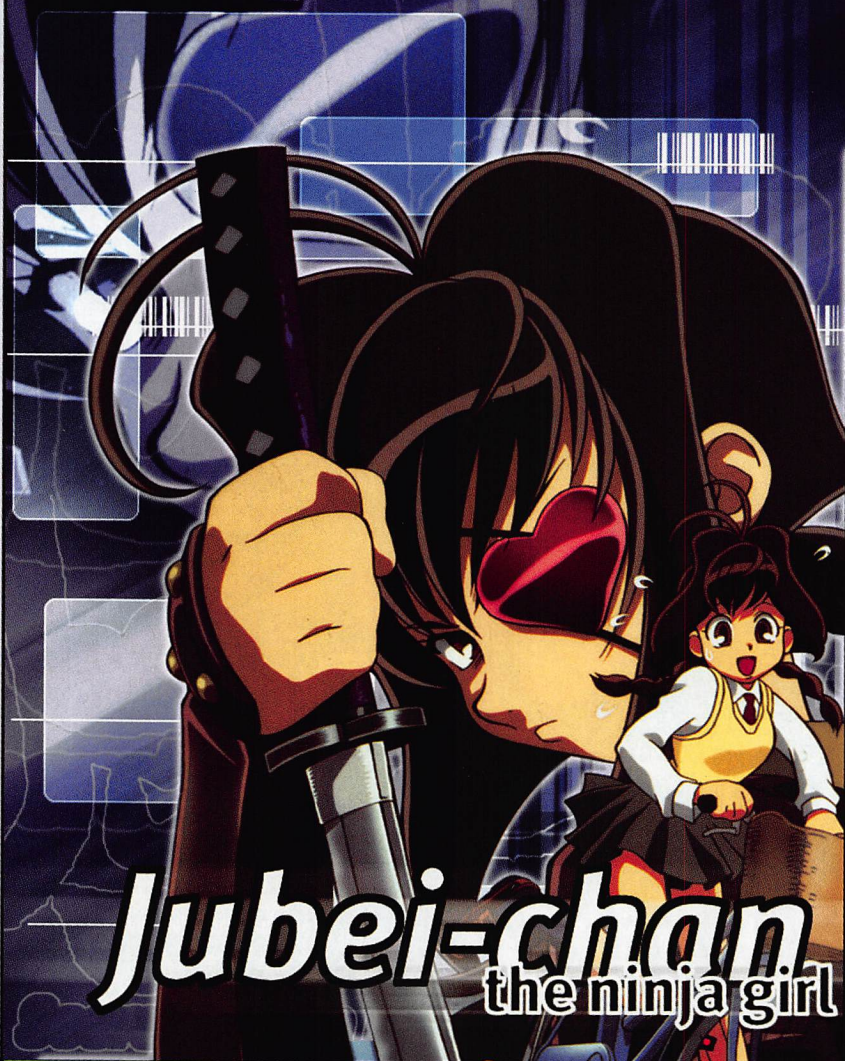
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JUBEI-CHAN

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•2000 BANDAI

100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED



ACTION/ADVENTURE

Jubei-chan is an ordinary schoolgirl, if a little denser and more absent minded than the rest. She and her over-protective father have just moved into town, and Jubei is starting at a new school. The bouncy, cheerful Jubei quickly makes new friends, and causes the hearts of several male classmates to skip a few beats. While trying to find her father in the woods, Jubei encounters a strange samurai who is dressed in archaic-looking clothes. He spouts some gibberish about her being the successor to Yagyu Jubei, a rather famous swordsman who lived over 300 years earlier. The samurai offers the lovely eye patch to Jubei, as she is the rightful heir to Yagyu Jubei's legacy. Make no mistake, though: the lovely eye patch may look like something Sailor Moon would wear to a party, but once Jubei dons the eye patch, she becomes the most dangerous schoolgirl to ever wield a katana.

Jubei-chan is one of the oddest anime to make an appearance in some time. The jokes may leave you scratching your head for a moment, as you think: "Was that stupid? Or was that funny?" Most of the humor of the show comes from the screaming, yelling, and general overreaction from the main characters. Jubei herself isn't much of a character, as she has a forgettable personality. Luckily, the antics of Jubei's father and her friends more than make up for her own shortcomings.

The animation is surprisingly smooth, and the scenes where Jubei straps on her eyepatch and starts taking names are fully animated with no cheating. The voices, however, are a different story. Most new dubs are getting much better, but this particular one took a huge leap backwards. Most all of the voices are painful to listen to, as Jubei herself speaks in a fake and stilted way: it sounded like she had stage fright. The only acceptable voice in the entire anime was the voice of Jubei's father.

My biggest question so far is: What in the world was the most feared and most talented swordsman in Japan doing with a lovely eye patch? But getting past that small detail, Jubei-chan is definitely worth a look. Just make sure to get the sub, 'cause voices this bad could cause irreparable auditory damage. **GR**



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**GOKU: MIDNIGHT EYE**

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO

•URBAN VISION

60 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED



ACTION/DRAMA

It's funny how this anime came up three times this past week: twice at Anime Expo 2000 in random conversation, and once through a friend who saw the box sitting on my shelf. *Goku: The Midnight Eye* might be a bit dated for some. A casual glance at the box art—copyright 1985—and the Yoshiaki Kawajiri direction, and you might mistake this fine work for something far too old to appreciate. The thing is, all three of us agreed that *Goku*, like ADV's excellent *The Cockpit* and *Vampire Hunter D*, is surprisingly quality stuff. Classic, I think, seems a far more appropriate description for a work that features character designs of such amazing detail; such craftsmanship seems like excruciating effort in this age of simpler characters and more dynamic camera angles. Urban Vision seems to be setting a trend for quality, not quantity, licenses based on this third acquisition. Even more so, their tendency has leaned to obtaining more adult-centered pulp fiction, with no clear-cut good-versus-evil scenario. Coming from the creator of the equally impressive *Demon City Shinjuku*, *Goku: Midnight Eye*'s more coherent story, more likeable anti-hero, and darkly palatable tone make this the more disregarded, albeit superior effort. This is the kind of cyberpunk that defined anime's cultish following in America. **GR**

**SLAYERS TRY**

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•2000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA

60 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED



FANTASY/COMEDY

Lina and company are still on the strangest journey they have ever embarked on to date. They are following Filia, the Golden Dragon Priestess, to the shrine of the Golden Dragons. Something at the shrine will help Lina save the world from destruction. Of course, along the way, they must stop to eat, squabble amongst themselves, and destroy small towns. Lina's party, consisting of Gourry, Zelgadis, Amelia, Filia, and Xellos, don't always get along that well. Filia and Xellos, who represent two warring factions in the general scope of the universe, are always at each other's throats. Xellos teases Filia about the ease with which her race resorts to violence. And Filia stabs back with accusations of the evils of Xellos' race of monsters. Lina is ready to tear her hair out by the end of each day.

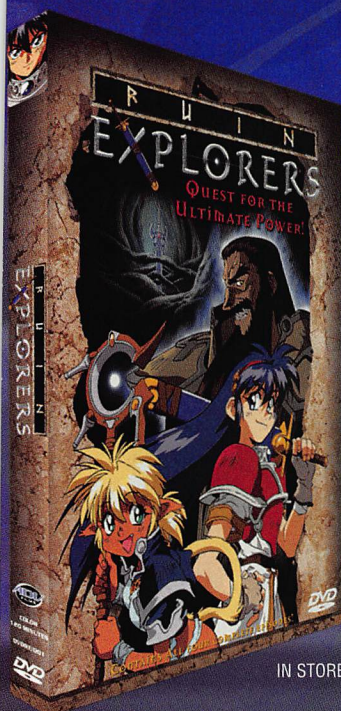
On the way to the Dragon Shrine, the party stumbles across some ancient ruins. Buried underneath the ruins is an ancient vehicle the size of the Coliseum. The vehicle was evidently used to shuttle large amounts of people from one town to the next. Luckily, the shuttle is headed in the direction that Lina needs to go. On the down side of things, the brakes don't seem to be working. While at the shrine Lina discovers more about the dragon races and the bloody wars that happened between them. The viewer is also treated to a little bit of background about the enemies who seek to destroy Lina.

I am happy to report that these episodes keep the high standard of slapstick humor and bad jokes about Gourry's squid-like brain that we have come to expect from *Slayers*. *Slayers Try* is a great anime for all types of anime fans. If you haven't seen the whole series up to this point, be sure to go back and take a look. **GR**





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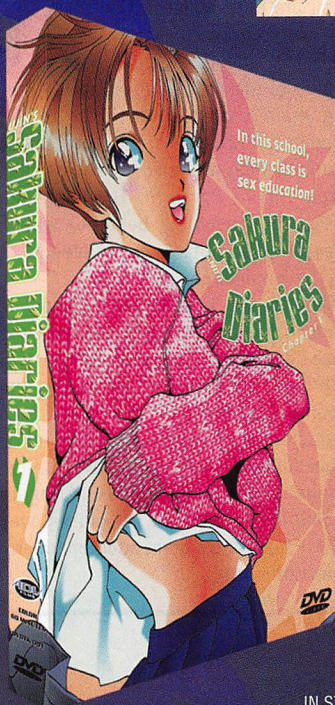
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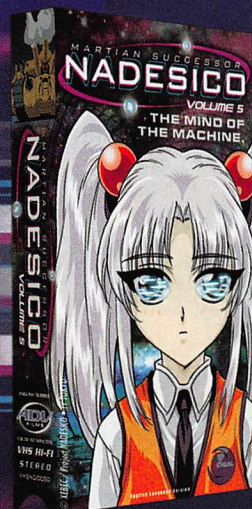


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SHAMANIC PRINCESS

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED

★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

Shamanic Princess' initial story line, which began in the first tape, comes to a close in tape two. Luckily the story manages to be compact, fairly easy to understand, and solid for a four-episode plot. Tiara continues on her quest to bring the Throne of Yord back home. But the Throne has other ideas. Lina and Kagetsu are both pulled inside the Throne and forced to fight Tiara when she arrives to rescue them. Once again the animation and art reassure that CLAMP and all the artists associated with that production studio are some of the best on the planet.



The main character designer for *Shamanic Princess* is the very talented Atsuko Ishida, who also did the designs for *Magic Knight Rayearth*. The character designs are absolutely beautiful, with a level of detail that is rarely seen in anything animated.

This second tape doesn't disappoint in the area of fight scenes either. Once again Tiara, Lina, and Leon clash but with more catastrophic results this time around. The American voices match the characters very well, and none of the usual stilted or monotone speech patterns plague any of the voices. Altogether, *Shamanic Princess* is a must-have for CLAMP fans, and a great addition for anyone's collection. **GR**



LOST UNIVERSE VOL. 2

REVIEWED BY YOON-SOON CHO
•2000 ADV FILMS
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED

★★★★ FANTASY/COMEDY

Kain Blueriver is a troubleshooter, who is hired to take care of any "problems" that may rise up for both individual clients, and for the Universal Protectors (the galactic police). Explosions and destruction of property also tend to follow him around. He is accompanied by Canal, the holographic manifestation of his ship, the Sword Breaker, and Millennium Fera Nocturne, a loud girl who likes to make her opinions known.

The first episode opens with a shot of a space station that looks eerily like the Death Star. I was expecting to hear the Imperial March in the background, and when Kain first wields his psy-blade, the first thought that any self-respecting sci-fi fan is going to have is, "Is that a lightsaber I see before me?! It is! It is! That's a lightsaber!"

The first three episodes are stand-alone stories that introduce the viewer to the characters and their personalities. It isn't until the fourth episode that you sit up and pay attention. The blending of traditional 2D animation with the 3D computer-generated graphics may not be very smooth the entire time, but instead of detracting from the anime, it seems to add an extra ounce of charm to it.

Despite the slow beginning of this series, I find myself surprisingly enthused, and cannot wait to see more. **GR**



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RURONI KENSHIN - WANDERING SAMURAI

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO

•2000 MEDIA BLASTERS

120 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED

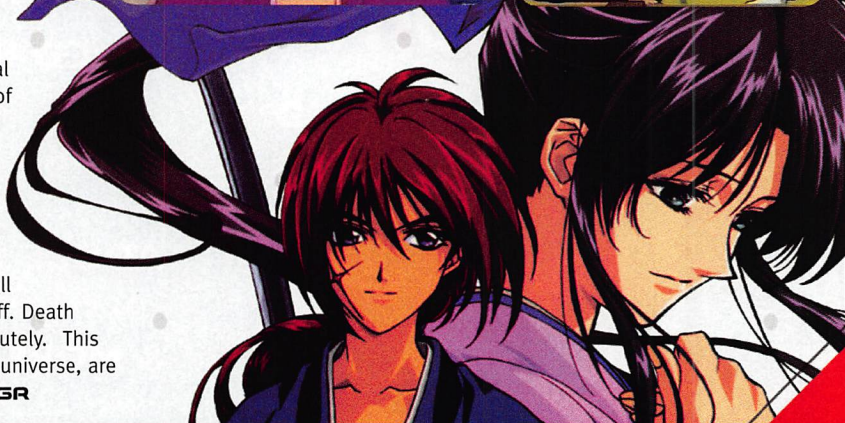


1/2 ACTION/DRAMA

Kenshin's been around for years with a staggering 96 episodes, a movie, and four OAVs, but it took quite a bit of convincing to get me to sit down and watch what I thought would be comedic and silly. To some extent, it is. I'm not your typical comedy fan, mind you. *Kenshin's* hahas, fortunately, aren't typical in the slightest. *Kenshin* is angst in disguise. A cast of instantly likeable characters with clear motivations and moral stances makes *Kenshin* an easy sell. Its biggest satisfaction comes when you accept the story's twist—that the yarn is both silly and serious; and that *Kenshin*, the likeable wanderer, suffers from self-imposed, and emotionally gripping, schizophrenia. This is a character drama, and a good one. The depths are hidden in the simple, eclectic cast.

Episodes 1-4 introduce us to *Kenshin*, a mysterious wanderer, part *Kenshiro* and part *Tenchi*, usually jovial and good natured. But like the unpredictable nature of the series, he can, in a breath, become a very frightening

man to be around. He is a killer, plain and simple, trying hard to be human. It's all very flowery stuff. Death consumes absolutely. This theme, and this universe, are mesmerizing. **GR**



SAMURAI-X

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO

•2000 ADV FILMS

60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED



ACTION/DRAMA

Even above giant mechs and social upheaval, I do appreciate a good ninja flick. *Dagger of Kamui*. *The Ninja Scroll*. *Yotoden*. Even *Mononoke*, to an extent, had the prerequisite swordplay, allowing it to be, without question, on my very exclusive list of romantic-era titles. This genre is beloved highest above all anime. Imagine, then, my surprise at how powerful a work this *Samurai X* was.

Taking many historical liberties, *Samurai X* mimics the factual and artistic depth of works like *The Hakkenden*, with the visual power, in both budget and amazing direction, of, say, *Macross Plus*. This adds richness, mind you. And with some of the best dialogue I've heard in anime since *Bebop*, *Samurai X* is simply one of the finest written feudal epics I've seen: not since the original *Gundam* have I seen a series that so measures the weight of death.

Serving as the dark prequel to the often light-hearted *Ruroni Kenshin* series, *Samurai X* follows the earliest years of the universe's lead character, *Kenshin: The Wanderer*. By virtue of quality writing and a dramatic, darker shift in tone, *Samurai X* explores *Kenshin* before he was amiable, when he was widely feared as the young killer of men. To accommodate, the violence rivals *The Ninja Scroll*, but seems nearly poetic in the series' shining moments of self-reflection and moral rationalizing. These are heights that comparable works hadn't the talent to touch. High praise; it's a crime that my review had to be so damned short. **GR**



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HAUNTED JUNCTION DVD Ep. 1-12
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT
300 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED/SUBTITLED
☆☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/COMEDY

The word *bizarre* comes to mind when speaking of *Haunted Junction*. Haruto is the president of the Holy Student Council at his high school, a position he was drafted into because he is the son of a priest. Most of the time, being the president of any club in high school is a sought-after position. But not for Haruto. He hates his life. Haruto wants to get up in the mornings, and eat breakfast, then go to a normal high school, on a normal campus where he has normal friends, and normal teachers, and he does normal teenage activities. Haruto wants to grow up to lead a perfectly normal life of working at a normal company, and married to a normal girl. Unfortunately for Haruto, he leads a very abnormal life. His high school is haunted, and it's his job as the Holy Student Council president to keep all the ghosts in line.

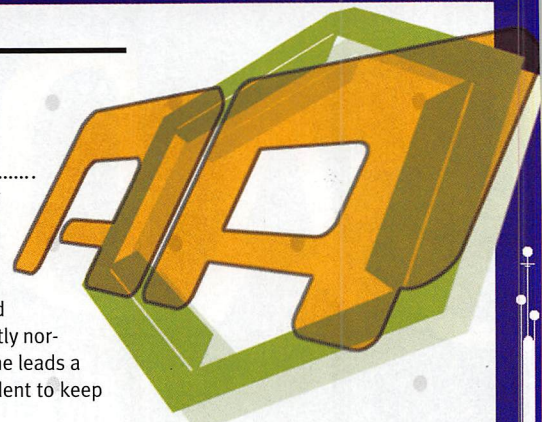
There are seven main spirits that haunt Haruto's school: Hanako-san, the sexy spirit of the toilet; Red Mantle, the gorgeous male ghost in a red cape; Mirror Girl, the small spirit of the mirrors; Giant, the huge spirit of the gym; Ninomiya, a walking statue; and Bones Sazuki and Haro Sato, the spirits of the science lab. Each of them has a certain use...well, all of them except Bones and Haro. As the president of the council, Haruto holds the seven special badges that are used to call on each of the ghosts whenever their help is needed.

Haruto's companions are Asahina and Kazumi, both of whom have spiritual backgrounds. Asahina is the daughter of a Shinto priest, whose specialty is exorcism. Asahina also has an unwholesome attraction to young boys and their underwear. Kazumi is the son of a Buddhist monk who is easily possessed by any wandering spirits. When he's not possessed, Kazumi spends most of his time chasing after Hanako-san, the toilet spirit. Most of the storylines involve the Spiritual Student Council, dealing with new ghosts who have come to the school for some reason or another. The episodes usually end with poor Haruto pulling out his hair and yelling, "Oh my God!"

Haunted Junction has some of the strangest humor ever seen on a TV screen. The intense cultural humor difference between Japan and America is made painfully apparent. Not that *Haunted Junction* isn't funny, because it is. It's "choke on your Cup O' Noodles" funny.

The animation is standard TV quality, with recycled scenes, and many still frames. The music isn't really anything special either. Most of *Haunted Junction*'s charm comes from its voices. To put it simply: people screaming hysterically about children's underwear in Japanese is funny.

Haunted Junction is really only for those of us who appreciate bizarre, disturbing humor with a bunch of toilet jokes thrown in for good measure. **GR**



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GAMERS' REPUBLIC EDITORS' TOP 5**Dave Halverson**

1. Spriggan **ADV**
2. Samurai X: Trust **ADV**
3. Photon **CPM**
4. Outlaw Star **ADV**
5. X **Manga**

Shola Akinnuso

1. Cowboy Bebop **Bandai**
2. Princess Mononoke **Miramax**
3. Samurai X **ADV**
4. Rurouni Kenshin **Anime Works**
5. Street Fighter Alpha **Manga**

Christina Alexander

1. Street Fighter Alpha **Manga**
2. Samurai X **ADV**
3. Rurouni Kenshin **Anime Works**
4. Trigun **Pioneer**
5. Haunted Junction **Bandai**

Gamers' Republic COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE **anime top 5**

urban vision and gamers' republic

READERS' TOP 5

1. Trigun **pioneer**
2. Rurouni Kenshin **anime works**
3. Fushugi Yuugi **pioneer**
4. Cowboy Bebop **bandai**
5. Saber Marionette J **bandai**



ALL NEW!! **TOP 5 ANIME CONTEST**

1ST PRIZE **Larue Binder**

Los Angeles, Ca.

Special Kawajiri signed set: Includes Signed "Wicked City" posters & signed "Bio Hunter" cel. VHS copies of "Goku I: Midnight Eye", "Wicked City", "Pet Shop of Horrors vol. 1 & 2", "Bio Hunter" and "The Cockpit", and a one-year subscription to Gamers' Republic!

2ND PRIZE **Mai Lee Moua**

St. Paul, Mn

VHS copies of "Goku I: Midnight Eye", "Wicked City", "Pet Shop of Horrors vol. 1 & 2", "Bio Hunter" and "The Cockpit", and a one-year subscription to Gamers' Republic!

3RD PRIZE **Rebecca Woods**

Florence, SC

VHS copies of "Goku I: Midnight Eye" and advance copy of "Goku II: Midnight Eye", and a one-year subscription to Gamers' Republic!

Congratulations to this month's winners!

**gamers' republic**

To enter the Urban Vision/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age and send it to: **Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361**, or e-mail our venerable leader at dhalverson@gamersrepublic.com. Prizes are listed above, first place through third place. Good Luck, everyone!

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PALISADES MARKETING



FINAL FANTASY VIII

Is there no end to the majesty of Palisade Marketing's video-game- and comic-based goodies? Will my VISA ever get a rest? From the looks of it, no gamer or credit card is safe. As if Final Fantasy VIII and Resident Evil weren't enough (they are doing a superb job with both), feast your eyes on these Chrono Cross statues from the amazing new Square RPG! These lovingly sculpted resin statues of (from left to right) Serge, Yameneko, and Kidd, are coming this fall at a very reasonable \$75 each. You can prebook them now at palisadesmarketing.com. While you're there, you may as well have a look at the new Front Mission 3 figures—the finest mechs in plastic to date—and secure a nice Lady Death lunch box to keep your meat cold. Any kid who shows up for school carrying one of these is sure to be on his way to fame and popularity, if not a little puppy love on the side. Palisades has so much in the works, we've decided to go behind the scenes for a little one-on-one. Look for it next month. -D. Halverson



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AN EYE FOR VENGEANCE

GOKU: MIDNIGHT EYE

From the critically acclaimed Yoshiaki Kawajiri (*Bio Hunter*, *Wicked City*, *Ninja Scroll*)...
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Goku is a former cop turned private detective with a personal interest in these crimes. Targeted by the enigmatic woman secretly responsible for the supposed suicides, Goku barely escapes becoming her next victim. Goku's opponent Hakuryu is the ultimate evil villain, experimenting in biotechnology for illegal arms-dealing worldwide. His influence

taints so many levels of politics and power, he is above the law... but not out of Goku's reach. Goku no longer operates within the confines of legality - he works outside the law, making him the perfect hunter. Driven by vengeance and with the capability of controlling the world, Goku races against time to stop the evil from spreading globally.

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BANDAI

DIGIMON



Bandai's on fire of late with two smash hits—Digimon and Gundam Wing — providing stylized content for the hungry youth of America. The TV is once again your friend. Let's just call it Pokémon relief. Close behind, look for the entire Escaflowne TV series to air on Fox Kids in the near future, a series which adults will no doubt cherish as much, if not more than, the kids. Pictured here are just a few toys from the extensive Gundam Wing and Digimon collections. Available in finer toy stores everywhere and select mail order houses online, both lines feature excellent detail. The Gundam Wing kits snap together and, although colored out of the box, benefit greatly if you whip out the old Testors and a fine brush. **-D. Halverson**

MOBILE SUIT
GUNDAM WING

TOYVAULT



The latest from Toy Vault includes their first offering from the popular PC RPG Deadlands. The cold-cast resin statue of the evil gun-slinging wraith, the Hanging Judge, will set you back \$129.00, but for fantasy collectors, he's well worth the bounty.

Published by Pinnacle Entertainment, Deadlands is a fantasy RPG set in the American west of 1876. Also shown is the latest in the Middle Earth collection, "Aeryn Mutation," from Farscape, as she appears in the terrifying transformation scene from the "DNA Mad Scientist" episode. An exclusive from Fandom.com (my default page at the old homestead), she's due to be released in the fall of 2000. Check out more of TV's latest at their site aptly named

toyvault.com!
-D. Halverson

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RESIDENT EVIL 3

NEEMESISTM

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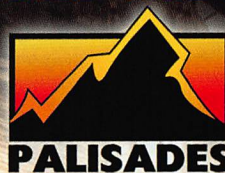
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next victim.

The Mega-hit franchise
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• MC2 RACING WHEEL

MAD CATZ • www.madcatz.com • RETAIL: \$59.95

DESIRABILITY: ●●●●●●●●

The Dreamcast's massive racing library helps justify the ownership of a good racing wheel, and Mad Catz' kitchen sink approach elevates their latest, the MC2. Featuring paddle shift levers, a set of accelerator and brake pedals, and even a side-mounted up-and-down shift knob, it makes the Sega-designed Rally Wheel seem sparse by comparison. A nicely sprung, partially rubberized wheel gives good feedback on the MC2, the pedals feature a nice articulation, and the clicky shift knob adds a nice element of realism when playing a game like Sega Rally. But like most third party peripherals, the build quality is not quite there, with a less-than-solidly-mounted wheel and a slight air of chintz about the plastic. It feels durable enough, however, and the added fun of the pedals and shifter almost makes it the equal of the Rally Wheel.

-MIKE HOBBS



• THRUSTMASTER BOARD

THRUSTMASTER • www.thrustmaster.com • RETAIL: \$70

DESIRABILITY: ●●●●●●●●

After the release of extreme sports classics like Cool Boarders and 1080, I thought it would be great to have a board-shaped controller to mimic the experience of being on an actual snowboard. Well, it seems ThrustMaster was thinking the same thing.

ThrustMaster's snowboard controller, the ThrustMaster Board for PS2, was revealed at E3 this year. Equipped with the tilt sensors, two programmable buttons on the board surface, and an ergonomic one-handed controller, the ThrustMasterBoard gives players access to all the regular buttons so that no aspect of the gaming experience is sacrificed.

"The ThrustMaster board completely changes the way you play snowboarding and skateboarding games," says Tali Fischer of ThrustMaster. "The concepts of moving a character on a board around with a controller, and integrating your whole body into the gaming experience, are incomparable. The Board has made the gaming experience more interactive, more realistic and, most importantly, more fun." Look for the device this fall.

-JUN SAKAI



GR GEAR

• POOL PRO FOR PS2

MIACOMET • www.miacomet.com • RETAIL: \$29.95

DESIRABILITY: ●●●●●●●●

The virtual billiards experience on console will be much better soon thanks to Miacomet's Pool Pro, which will be released for PS2 in the fall of 2000. The Pool Pro builds on its predecessor, the Pool Shark controller for PC and Mac, which has been acclaimed within the industry, as it succeeded in adding a new dimension to virtual pool playing. Considering the fact that the PC Pool Shark was a great controller, the Pool Pro for PS2 will surely measure up as it helps to maintain the motion and feeling of real play using natural hand-grips. I cannot wait to play Billiard Master 2 for PS2 using Pool Pro.

-JUN SAKAI



• SPOON WATCHES

SEIKO • www.virtualspoon.com • RETAIL: \$99.50-\$250.00

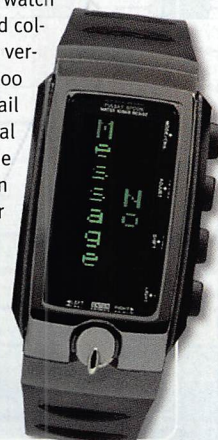
DESIRABILITY: ●●●●●●●●

A watch is about the only acceptable piece of large male jewelry in these modern times. We can thank the gods of good taste for that, but that doesn't mean a flashy watch has to be gaudy. Indeed, it can be perfectly appropriate and pleasantly futuristic, as is the case with these Spoon watches, made under the various auspices of the legendary Seiko watch company. Available in a variety of spacey styles and colors, they often feature unique functionality, like the vertically oriented S.A.M., which can store up to 100 memos, including e-mail addresses, urls, personal messages, and phone numbers. All Spoon watches are water resistant.

-MIKE HOBBS



S.A.M. ▶
◀ ROAD TRIP
◀ JELLY MAX



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

THESE CODES NEED TO BE INPUT IN THE FREE SKATE MODE. THE SCREEN WILL SHAKE IF THE CODE IS INPUT CORRECTLY. TO UNDO THE CODES, LIKE SLOW MOTION, JUST REDO IT. YOU CAN COMBINE SEVERAL OF THESE TOGETHER.

GOT HEAD?

THIS WILL GIVE YOU BIG HEAD MODE. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS X, B, UP, LEFT(2). DO END RUN AND QUIT AND GO TO THE CHARACTER SELECT SCREEN.



GOT STARTING LOCATIONS?

THIS WILL LET YOU PICK VARIOUS ADVANTAGEOUS STARTING LOCATIONS IN EACH LEVEL. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS X, B, A, UP, DOWN. YOU WILL RECEIVE A NEW OPTION ON THE SCREEN CALLED SKIP TO RESTART, WHICH LISTS A VARIETY OF NEW STARTING POINTS.

GOT ENOUGH?

THIS WILL GIVE YOU A FULL, YELLOW SPECIAL BAR ALL THE TIME. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS A, Y, B, DOWN, UP, RIGHT.

GOT LEVELS?

THIS WILL UNLOCK ALL OF THE LEVELS. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS Y, RIGHT, UP, X, Y, LEFT, UP, X, Y. SELECT END RUN AND QUIT THE LEVEL AND GO TO LEVEL SELECT.



GOT SLOW?

THIS WILL MAKE THE GAME RUN IN SLOW MOTION. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS X, LEFT, UP, X, LEFT.

GOT FAST?

THIS WILL MAKE THE GAME RUN IN TURBO MODE. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS B, RIGHT, UP, DOWN, B, RIGHT, UP, X, Y.

GOT DICK?

TO UNLOCK OFFICER DICK AS A PLAYABLE CHARACTER, COLLECT ALL THIRTY TAPES IN CAREER MODE.

GOT CLEAVAGE?

FIRST, OPEN OFFICER DICK AS A PLAYABLE CHARACTER AND PLAY WITH HIM IN ANY LEVEL. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS Y, UP, Y, UP, B, UP, LEFT, Y. CHOOSE END RUN AND THEN QUIT. START A NEW GAME AND PRIVATE CARRERA WILL APPEAR IN PLACE OF OFFICER DICK.



GOT BALLS?

TO WATCH THE NEVERSOFT DEVELOPMENT TEAM MEMBERS TRY TO...UM...SKATE, OPEN OFFICER DICK AND USE HIM TO WIN GOLD IN ALL THREE COMPETITIONS. THEN GO TO VIEW VIDEOS, CINEMATICS, MORE CINEMATICS AND FINALLY BAILS.



GOT IT ALL?

THIS IS THE ULTIMATE CODE THAT WILL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING. PAUSE THE GAME. HOLD THE L TRIGGER AND PRESS B, RIGHT, UP, DOWN, B, RIGHT, UP, X, Y. ALL CHEATS WILL BE UNLOCKED, INCLUDING ALL OF THE LEVELS, OFFICER DICK, ALL OF THE CUSTOMIZED BOARDS, ALL THE SKATERS ATTRIBUTES' MAXIMIZED AND ALL THE VIDEOS.

GOT VIDEO?

TO WATCH EACH CHARACTER'S ENDING VIDEO CLIPS, GET THE GOLD IN ALL THREE COMPETITIONS WITH THAT CHARACTER AND THEN GO TO VIEW VIDEOS ON THE MAIN MENU AND THEN LOAD REPLAY.

HAWK'S MOVES

THE 900: GET BIG AIR, RIGHT, DOWN, B.
KICKFLIP McTWIST: RIGHT(2), B.
540 BOARD VARIAL: LEFT(2), X.
360 FLIP-TO-MUTE: DOWN, RIGHT, X.

OFFICER DICK'S MOVES

YEEEEHAW FRONTFLIP: DOWN, UP, B
ASSUME THE POSITION: LEFT(2), B.
NECKBREAK GRIND: LEFT, RIGHT, Y.

PRIVATE CARRERA'S MOVES

HO-HO-HO: LEFT, UP + Y.
SOMI SPIN: LEFT, DOWN, B.
WELL HARDFLIP: RIGHT, LEFT, X.

MUSHA'S MOVES

FRONTFLIP: DOWN, UP, B.
360 SHOVE-IT REWIND: RIGHT(2), X.
ONE-FOOTED THUMPIN': RIGHT, DOWN, Y.

BURNQUIST'S MOVES

BACKFLIP: UP, DOWN, B.
ONE-FOOTED SMITH: RIGHT(2), Y.
BURNTWIST: LEFT, UP + Y.

CAMPBELL'S MOVES

FRONTFLIP: DOWN, UP, B.
KICKFLIP UNDERFLIP: LEFT, RIGHT, X.
CASPER SLIDE: UP, DOWN, Y.

THOMAS'S MOVES

FRONTFLIP: DOWN, UP, B.
540 FLIP: LEFT, DOWN, X.
ONE-FOOTED NOSEGRIND: UP(2), Y.

GLIFBERG'S MOVES

KICKFLIP McTWIST: RIGHT(2), B.
CHRIST AIR: LEFT, RIGHT, B.
TRIPLE KICKFLIP: UP, DOWN, X.

LASEK'S MOVES

FINGERFLIP AIRWALK: LEFT, RIGHT, B.
KICKFLIP McTWIST: RIGHT(2), B.
VARIAL HEELFLIP JUDO: DOWN, UP, X.

REYNOLDS'S MOVES

BACKFLIP: UP, DOWN, B.
TRIPLE KICKFLIP: LEFT(2), X.
HEELFLIP-TO-BLUNTSIDE: DOWN(2), Y.

ROWLEY'S MOVES

BACKFLIP: UP, DOWN, B.
DOUBLE HARDFLIP: RIGHT, DOWN, X.
DARK SLIDE: LEFT, RIGHT, Y.

STEAMER'S MOVES

BACKFLIP: UP, DOWN, B.
JUDO MADONNA: LEFT, DOWN, B.
PRIMO GRIND: LEFT(2), Y.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

TOO \$HORT

Interview by Tom Stratton

The history of rap and hip-hop would be incomplete without several chapters dedicated to Todd Shaw, known among his peers as Too \$hort. An original in homegrown west-coast rap, he has persevered in the cut-throat game of music and is getting ready to drop the 12th rap album (*The Nasty Album*) in his 20-year career. Being a long time listener and Bay

Area native, I found it my duty to take advantage of the opportunity to talk to the rap game's most notorious player. The talk was more than I could have imagined, considering how big a fan I am, and his candid remarks elevated my appreciation for him that much more. Afterwards, I squeezed out of the hotel suite just as some, er, ladies were about to turn the place freaky for a photo shoot, Too \$hort style.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: So, this album set for September. How long has it been in production?

Too\$hort: The new one comin' out? How long did it take to make it? We started recording in December of last year, through January. So, about a 60-day process.

GR: ANY OF THE JOINTS CARRY OVER FROM STUFF YOU COULDN'T FIT OR JUST DIDN'T GET ON YOUR LAST ALBUM?

T\$: Yea. Actually we took a song I did for some soundtrack—I hate to say I can't remember which soundtrack. Oh yea, *The Corrupter*. We took that track and put it on the album, 'cause lots of people didn't get a chance to really hear it. It's this track right here, "Dirty Love." It's a bumpin' track produced by Eric Sermon. So, you know, it had to make a Too \$hort album.

GR: IT'S FUNNY, 'CAUSE I'VE BEEN BOUNCIN' TO THIS TRACK FOR A WHILE NOW AND I NOTICED YOU SAY, "I HAD A DREAM / I COULDN'T SELL RECORDS."

T\$: [Grinning] Yeah. It was more like a nightmare.

GR: THEN YOU GO ON TO SAY IT WASN'T THE FIRST TIME YOU HAD THIS DREAM.

T\$: Nah, nah...nah. Man, I've been successful for so long makin' raps that it's a feelin' you get from time to time. I've seen a lot of people come and go...

GR: Right.

T\$: ...And who's to say, one day I may put out an album and it'll only sell 100,000 records and I fall off. So, it's a nightmare, but I don't think it will ever happen.

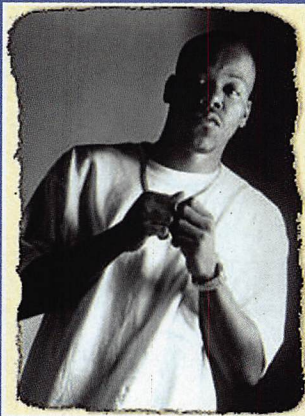
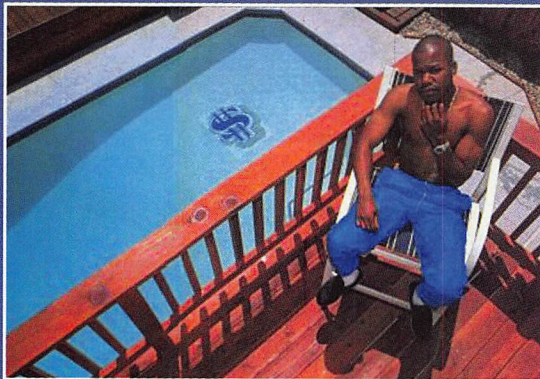
GR: So if one of your albums only sold around 100,000 copies, do you think it would be because the audience is changing?

T\$: If Too \$hort only sells 100,000 records, that would mark the fall off. [Laughing] That ain't fiendin' to happen, man. So don't even trip.

GR: 12 ALBUMS! THAT'S F*N AMAZING. AND LISTENING TO BORN TO MACK (THE FIRST ALBUM ON A MAJOR LABEL AND DISTRIBUTION), TO THE LATEST SIX TRACKS I'VE HEARD...**

T\$: It's a formula, man.

GR: YEAH. THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY.



THE SOUND IS REAL TIGHT AND EFFICIENT AND IT SEEMS ALL OF THE PIECES FALL IN TO THE PROPER PLACE.

T\$: All I need to do is get into the studio with Ant Banks and everything will be alright. The music could be made by anybody, you know, as long as it's got that flavor, no matter what's on the track. We don't necessarily record together all the time, but we make songs sound great. Like a song I did with Lil' Kim, it was never on a Too \$hort album, but it was on the *Booty Call* soundtrack. If you pulled up the raw tracks, it was terrible. Me and Banks got in there and started doctorin' it and fixin' it. Compressing things and movin' stuff around and people loved it.

GR: So, in the Oakland game...

T\$: [A look of, "did this fool just say Oakland game!"] Oakland game, huh?

GR: YEAH... COMING FROM OAKLAND AND RAPPIN' ABOUT LIFE IN THE BAY—HOW HAS IT FARED?

T\$: Well...I love Oakland rap, man. It's something I've been such a big part of. It's hard to be a rapper in Oakland and not have your \$hort Dog influences, you know. Even if you don't rap like me, it's just the sound you grow up listening to. I've got a lot of love for Oakland and Oakland has a lot of love for me. So I can't put nothing before it.

GR: ARE YOU STILL GETTING THE LOVE FROM RADIO STATIONS UP IN THE BAY LIKE KMEL AND BACK THEN, IN THE DAYS, KSOL? I KNOW A LOT OF RAP IS REGIONAL AND ONLY A FEW STRETCH FAR AND WIDE CONSISTENTLY.

T\$: Off and on. They go through their moments. Some years they're with ya', some years they're not. But for the most part and in the big picture there has been a lot of love from the local radio. Not to say there aren't any dry moments. They'll be mad at me or E*40 [another Bay Area rapper], but it all comes around. It's like a relationship between a man and a woman, I guess. [Laughing] It's funny, man, that shit is regional. That's why I try to be on Jay Z's album, B.I.G.'s album, Snoop's albums—so that I hit a little bit of everywhere. I even like doing a lot of underground shit, but Jive don't like that. [Laughing] Little stuff like that goes a long way, though.

GR: YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO PULL THROUGH WHAT HAS TO HAVE BEEN SOME TOUGH TIMES AND YOUR STYLE AND MESSAGES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME.

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP IT GOING?

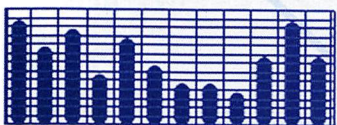
T\$: Yeah man, it's not hard or any big f***n deal. The thing people don't realize, you don't lose your favorite rapper because you get tired of what they're doin'. It's because they've stopped makin' what you want to hear. They go home and switch up. They used to be sittin' at home in front of a 13" TV with the clothes hanger helping to make the picture watchable. Now they got digital cable with 50" flat screens and that motherf***er ain't comin' out no more. You know what I'm sayin'. I like to stay in the mix, talk to motherf***ers and live life. I write about real life and make the shit sound real.

GR: YOUR GUEST APPEARANCES AND COLLABORATIONS STRETCH THROUGH JUST ABOUT EVERYONE IN RAP AND HIP-HOP. ANYONE YOU STILL WAITING TO MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN WITH?

T\$: Well, I think it's a shame that I never laid a vocal on a Dr. Dre beat. I love the shit out of Dre, so it's cool and I don't think it's a great tragedy. It's just something that personally I want to do. Everything he touches is hot! Outside of that, I've just been mixin' and minglin' with a lot of people. I think nowadays, rappers should see themselves like jazz artists did, and just hook up collaborations. It's a proven formula among jazz artists that collaborations are some of the best songs. You get in the studio and you got that competition with your peers and it brings out the best in you.

GR: OH HELL YEAH! ABSOLUTELY.

T\$: I think I need to do a track with Tray Dee from the Eastsidaz. I heard this for



awhile, but I just reconfirmed it. The motherf****r was born the day before me. Not that his birthday is the day before me, but he was born the day before me. And I just feel we need to put some shit on a motherf****n CD.

GR: YOU MENTION JAZZ. IS THAT AN INFLUENCE IN YOUR SOUND?

T\$: Nah...I'm real lightweight on the jazz artists' names and songs, I just like the way, back in the day, they would get together and not just do a special appearance, but do whole albums of different collaborations, switchin' shit up. Like I had heard that a while back Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown had been offered a bunch of money to make an album together, but instead they makin' songs about each other. What the f****! I would have gone through it, even if I hated that motherf****er, and got that money. You know, talk shit like, f**** that bitch in studio 4, all the while counting that money. And that would have been a big album. Just time that shit with Foxy's or Lil' Kim's solo albums and it would probably be poppin'.

GR: NOT TO STRAY AWAY FROM MUSIC, BUT HAVE VIDEO GAMES BEEN A CONSTANT PART OF YOUR LIFE AT ALL?

T\$: Yeah. I come from the two little lines with the little ball bouncin' around.

GR: Pong?

T\$: Yeah. We used to have that shit. P.O.N.G., Pong. [Laughing] That's all we had, then I remember in the ninth grade going to 7-11 and seeing Space Invaders and Asteroids, just before Pac-Man came out and motherf****ers would go to the 7-11 and play Asteroids. They were hooked on that shit like drugs. But the home shit was really poppin' when the first Sega system came out. That shit was everywhere. I'm talking the Sega Genesis with the football games. I would just smoke some weed and come up with raps while I watched other motherf****ers play. I bought every motherf****n game for that system. So no matter where we were at, they were there. One game I did get into was Road Rash. The first Road Rash, that shit was poppin'! It helped me get my speed jones.

GR: HOW ABOUT NOWADAYS? ANYTHING ON AND CRACKIN'?

T\$: Vigilante 8 was hot. I liked that. But for the most part, I really started getting into games this year with the Sega Dreamcast. I'm a Dreamcast guy. I keep hearin' this shit about PlayStation 2, so when I was over in Japan I went to go check the shit out. Nothing looked better than the Dreamcast, and even some of the motherf****ers there were sayin' the shit ain't all that. So I'll wait until the PlayStation 2 drops to like \$150 and there's hella of them on the shelves. [Laughing]

GR: SO THEN WHEN YOU BOUGHT YOUR DREAMCAST, WHAT WAS THE GAME YOU HAD TO GET WITH IT?

T\$: Soul Calibur! That's me. And Speed Devils. I'm hooked on that shit. Sometimes I need to relax a bit and I'll put on Speed Devils. That motherf****er rolls! Of course you can't own a Dreamcast without good 'ol NFL and NBA 2K...no doubt.

GR: NICE! SO YOU LIKE PLAYING THE SPORTS GAMES ONE-ON-ONE OR UP TO FOUR PLAYERS?

T\$: Well, I hate to say it man... I can't beat the computer so all I can do is play other sorry motherf****ers like me and make it fun.

GR: THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT.

T\$: Yea man. I got a grip on the football game so I can beat the computer there, it wasn't as hard to get. But on basketball, the computer is still checkin' me. I would pick Portland and I got beat by the Warriors, but I'm gettin' there.

GR: WHAT'S THE BEST THING YOU LIKE ABOUT THE GAMES?

T\$: Probably the graphics, like this piece of shit we lookin' at right now, is nothin'. [Ed's note: The game onscreen was F-Zero on the SNES.] So probably the graphics. I know this shit was from back in, what, '94? But still, it looks like shit. That's why I never got into PlayStation; shit don't look right. There's definitely a battle between the PlayStation and the Dreamcast between the rappers and the studios.

GR: OH YEAH...

T\$: They'll put on a game, right. Like NFL or NBA on the Dreamcast, then the motherf****er that loses be like, "this is fake as shit, I'll bust your ass if we was on the PlayStation!" Then the debate starts about how wack one game is compared to the other. Niggas keep talkin' about how real PlayStation games are. They all trippin', cause the Dreamcast has the real shit poppin'! That sort of shit goes on all the time in the studio. Day to day, it's: play some video games, smoke some weed and let loose in the studio.

GR: WHERE DO YOU USUALLY GO TO RECORD YOUR MUSIC?

T\$: I've always had my own studio at my house

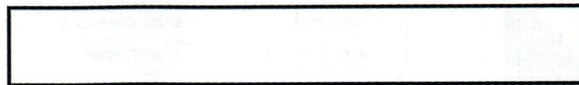
THE HISTORY OF TOO \$HORT



- Don't Stop Rappin' 1985
- Raw, Uncut and X-Rated 1986
- Players 1987
- Born to Mack 1988
- Life Is... 1989
- Short Dog's in the House 1990
- 1991
- Shorty The Pimp 1992
- Get In Where You Fit In 1993
- 1994
- Cocktails 1995
- Gettin' It (album number ten) 1996
- 1997
- 1998
- Can't Stay Away 1999
- 2000

Born Todd Shaw, \$hort grew up in L.A.'s South Central. Shortly after his family moved to Oakland in the early '80s, he began selling tapes out of the back of his car. He signed to the local label 75 Girls, where he released an album in 1985, *Don't Stop Rappin'*, and he's been doing just that. Soon after, Too \$hort formed his own Dangerous Music label with friend Freddy B. He recorded *Born to Mack* in 1988, and sold over 50,000 without the help of any major record labels. New York's Jive Records picked up on the buzz from across the country, and provided a national deal for the album one year later. With virtually no radio airplay, *Born to Mack* went gold and its follow-up *Life Is... Too \$hort* achieved platinum sales by 1989.

The immense success of Too \$hort during 1988-89 made him much more viable for radio airplay, and "The Ghetto" (from 1990's *Short Dog's in the House*) made number 12 on the R&B charts, even enjoying a brief stay just outside the pop Top 40. He continued his hit track record with 1992's *Shorty the Pimp* and 1993's *Get In Where You Fit In*, both of which went platinum. In 1995 came *Cocktails* and *Gettin' It* (album No. 10) became his fifth platinum album by late 1996. He decided to retire, then three years later, he returned with the appropriately titled *Can't Stay Away*.



and we'll work on music on a daily basis. Just makin' some songs, not necessarily makin' an album. Every time you hear one of my albums, I've got at least twice as many songs that are layin' around somewhere. It's the Tupac factor.

GR: REALLY? INTERESTING.

T\$: For real man. That motherf***er would just make songs – not for any album, just to make music. So, I'll go to Bank's house, he got a studio there and we just hit it. Over three or four days, I'll lay the vocals down on a bunch of shit over there. Then, when it's time to make an album and the record company comes in, we take it to the big studios to really lay it down. Some of it goes on in New York and the rest in L.A. and I'll call whoever, like Scarface or E*40, and meet up at the studio. So the shit we already worked on at my house or Bank's house is the same shit we poppin' in the big studio. We don't really sit in a big studio and create new beats. We already got the shit tracked; somebody may come in and we'll mix in their vocals. It's all a part of that formula.

GR: DO YOU LIKE TO LAY THE TRACK DOWN FIRST, OR DO YOU HAVE VOCALS THAT YOU'RE JUST WAITING FOR THE RIGHT BEAT?

T\$: Hmmm...I go more or less for the music first. Then, like a song like this one might motivate me to write, but when I'm through I'll hear a different beat and put it down like that. We're just a bunch of studio junkies. Straight up. I think it's harder to fall off than it is to just stay in the game. I think you need to work at falling off. You know, confuse the situation by overdoing shit or going to jail, pissing the record company off or some other stupid shit.

GR: F*, MAN, OVER 12 ALBUMS. HOW DO YOU KEEP THE SHIT SOUNDING SO FRESH, BUT STILL HOLDING THAT TOO \$HORT SOUND?**

T\$: There's a sound we captured. Once upon a time, it could have been *Born To Mack*, the first album I did with Jive or *Life Is...or Short Dog's in the House*. Somewhere in there we captured this moment and it was the perfect Too \$hort. Like how heroin addicts talk about that first high and they always want to reach that level again. That's what we do. The only problem is we're driving in Benzs and livin' in big ass houses. You need to be a broke ass motherf***er. Hungry and starving for that moment or that chance to step onto the other side. All we can do is get close.

GR: YEAH, I FEEL YA'.

T\$: I bet you anybody would fix their mouth to say that. You know, Dre wasn't broke when he made *The Chronic*, but that was a crossroads in his life. But you take the first N.W.A. album, *The Chronic*, and 2001 and you'll probably like them in that order. You know what I'm sayin'?

GR: FOR SURE. YEAH, MAN, I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

T\$: 'Cause those motherf***ers were broke when they were makin' that N.W.A. album. They probably had some change, but they were hungry. Thinkin' to themselves, "Damn, I really want this shit! I want it." So I'm just sayin', "Man, I'm maintainin'." I really wish I could capture somethin' that was goin' down on the *Life Is Too Short*, *Freaky Tales* songs, but I was just a youngster comin' up with nothin'. It's like survival now. I got house notes to pay and shit. Motherf***in' shit gets ugly when your record ain't sellin'.

GR: I FEEL THAT. HAVING A THIRST FOR SOMETHING YOU DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO AS WELL AS YOU WANT TO AND IT PUSHES YOU TO WORK THAT MUCH HARDER. THEN ONCE YOU GOT YOUR FIRST TASTE, LEARNING HOW TO DEAL WITH IT SO IT DOESN'T STOP YOU FROM STRIVING FOR MORE. THAT SHIT IS REAL, MAN.

T\$: In rap you need to take the same stages you would if you were going for your Masters degree. You aren't going to be able to function properly and reach your peak in the rap game if you don't have that grace period and that hunger. At first you're not really in it, you're learning it, trying to understand it just like college. College doesn't necessarily have to do shit with your career. But if you had it, you wouldn't give it back. That's how I feel about me, when I was struggling to become a rapper. I spent eight years as a rapper with no money and didn't have shit. I was just a rapper.

GR: HOW HAS IT BEEN THROUGH THE YEARS? 20 YEARS IN AN INDUSTRY WHERE IT



CONSTANTLY GETS HARDER TO TRUST OR FIGURE OUT PEOPLE, IT MUST BE DIFFICULT TO KEEP RELATIONS WITH GOOD PEOPLE.

T\$: Yeah. I try not to burn bridges, but some people get mad at you. Some people you forget, some people you never see again, but I just really try not to burn any bridges. A lot of the same people I've always known or deal with, I still deal with. [At this point a video by Lil' Zane popped on the TV screen.]

T\$: Hold up, man, this is the first time I've seen this video. I was there while they were shooting it. Lil' Zane got \$700,000 to shoot this thing. He soundin' like Tupac in this song. Them some bad little broads in this video. They were actin' so stuck up. A few weeks earlier I came from Jay Z's "Big Pimpin'" video where the hoes was loose. Then I go to this one and they were all uptight. Touch a bitch on her arm and get all sorts of attitude. Tight little video.

GR: WHO COMES UP WITH THE CONCEPTS FOR YOUR VIDEOS?

T\$: I'm not really big on videos, man. So when we do one, we might just get with a director and exchange some mutual things. This album we about to get really freaky on the visuals, though. Jive is scared to get X-rated with me, though. [Laughing] They got Britney now, so they try to keep it clean.

GR: THEN DO YOU RELY ON RADIO PLAY OR PRINT?

T\$: Word of mouth and hardcore fan base is basically what we're floating on right now. I think the last album kinda' snuck out there and didn't really get the recognition, even though Sound Scan scanned over 700,000 copies. People keep tellin' me they never heard it. So this time we definitely goin' to let the people know, old-school Too \$hort ain't retired and there will be another one after this. Number 13 is already in the works. So you know, expect it and don't expect a lot of time in between this one and the next. We'll be keepin' it goin', one a year, and see who can catch up or break my record. Someone will do it, someone will make more songs than Too \$hort, but for now...

GR: I WAS ACTUALLY TRYING TO THINK OF ANOTHER RAPPER OR HIP-HOP ARTIST THAT WAS EVEN CLOSE TO 12 ALBUMS, BUT I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYONE BACK IN THE DAY THAT IS STILL MAKIN' MUSIC OTHER THAN LL COOL J.

T\$: He moves at a slower pace. I think he's got like six or seven.

GR: I THOUGHT SO. I DON'T EVEN THINK ANYONE ELSE HAS BROKEN DOUBLE DIGITS.

T\$: Nope, not even close. There are some local dudes, puttin' some shit out. Like this dude in Detroit who's got like 30 tapes out. [Laughing]

GR: OH SHIT! WORLDWIDE, DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY ALBUMS YOU'VE SOLD?

T\$: It would be safe to say with 11 albums, over 10 million records. For me, I just try to take it so far out there that the one thing they'll have to say about me is that \$hort made the most records.

GR: OH, FOR SURE!

T\$: That doesn't even count the albums I've made guest spots on.

GR: DAMN...NOT TO LOSE FOCUS, BUT WHAT GAME DOES \$SHORT WANT TO SEE THAT HASN'T BEEN MADE YET?

T\$: A'ight. Let me tell you a game that I was hooked on. Driver. Give me Driver on the Dreamcast and I'll be a happy motherf***er. That's what I need, Driver. High speed chases, old-school cars runnin' from the police!

GR: DRIVER 2 IS COMIN' OUT, BUT I DON'T THINK THEY'VE ANNOUNCED THAT SHIT FOR THE DREAMCAST YET.

T\$: Why not, man. What's the politics?

GR: I'M NOT QUITE SURE, BUT EVIDENTLY THERE ARE SOME. SHIT, I'VE TAKEN A LOT OF YOUR TIME. TODAY HAS BEEN REAL NICE. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING.

T\$: It's all good, man.

D. Halverson

1. PERFECT CIRCLE
mer de noms
2. ALICE COOPER
brutal planet
3. BT
movement in still life
4. QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
R
5. HEAVY METAL FAKK2
soundtrack

B. Fiechter

1. COMING HOME
warming up your living area
2. PATTY GRIFFIN
living with ghosts
3. PAT MCGEE BAND
shine
4. LAVA DIVA
creaks and dogs
5. STROKE 9
nasty little thoughts

M. Hobbs

1. BJÖRK
homogenic
2. TORU TAKEMITSU
toward the sea
3. ORBITAL
middle of nowhere
4. PHILIP GLASS
anima mundi
5. TORI AMOS
to venus and back

T. Stratton

1. OUTKAST
atlans
2. DEL
i wish my brother george...
3. TOO SHORT
get in where you fit in
4. TEENA MARIE
robbery
5. SNOOP DOGG
last meal

Pooch

1. CYPRESS HILL
skull & bones
2. DR. DRE
chronic 2001
3. FATBOY SLIM
norman cook collection
4. SADE
diamond life
5. PINK FLOYD
wish you were here

S. Akkinuso

1. BEN HARPER
burn to shine
2. THE ROOTS
things fall apart
3. EMINEM
the marshall mathers lp
4. BLACKSTAR
blackstar
5. AMEL LARRIEUX
infinite possibilities

C. Hoffman

1. CADILLAC ANGELS
live
2. NOBU UEMATSU
final fantasy 8 piano coll.
3. YASUNORI MITSUDA & MILLENNIAL FAIR: creed
4. SPACE CHANNEL 5
original soundtrack
5. SAVAGE GARDEN
affirmation

E. Fear

1. NINE INCH NAILS
pretty hate machine
2. SPLENDER
splender
3. FOO FIGHTERS
foo fighters
4. WEEZER
weezer
5. MINDLESS SELF-INDULGENCE
frankenstein girls will seem strangely sexy

B. Elmquist

1. PERFECT CIRCLE
mer de noms
2. EMINEM
the marshall mathers lp
3. NOFX
pump up the valium
4. STRUNG OUT
the skinny years
5. MEGADETH
countdown to extinction

N. Lui

1. DJ LARS HOLTE
in trance we trust
2. DJ TIESTO
search of sunrise
3. BUBBLEGUM CRISIS
complete vocal collection
4. SABER MARIONETTE
vocal best
5. VARIOUS ARTISTS
dream dance vol. 15

Audiophiles
What GR is listening to this month





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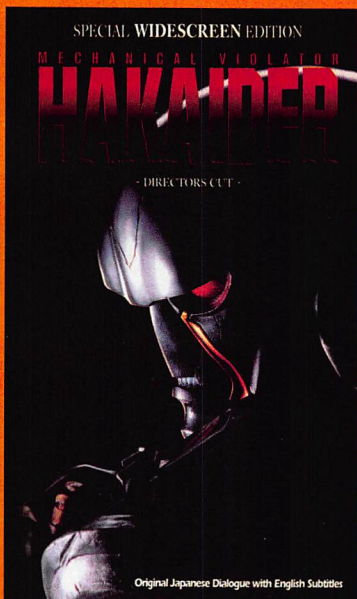
MECHANICAL VIOLATOR HAKAIDER

REVIEW

TOKYO SHOCK (www.media-blasters.com)
 JAPANESE • VHS • WIDESCREEN EDITION
 UNRATED (CONTAINS GRAPHIC VIOLENCE)
 REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON



There is still poverty and confusion everywhere beyond this place.



Original Japanese Dialogue with English Subtitles

When it comes to cinema, we have it made here in the U.S.—a fact we often take for granted. One only needs to dip into the murky waters of Japanese action and pulp movies to get an idea of just how sophisticated Western movie making has become. Admittedly, their appeal is more for the cheese factor than anything else, but still, even serious sci-fi like *Mechanical Violator Hakaider* is so packed with Western parodies and laugh-out-loud set and character design that I can only liken its fascination to slowing down on the freeway. But like any red-blooded American, some of my fondest childhood memories are of Godzilla flattening downtown Tokyo, and I'd still rather see the guy in the rubber suit than the CG Godzilla that Emmerich threw at us. This film relies on resourcefulness (and lots of rubber) to achieve its illusions of sci-fi, and is packed with special effects of the Asian kind. Taking crude technique to the extreme—running the gamut from collapsing foam walls to exploding blood packs and everything in between—*Hakaider* does so in high style. Aside from a sea of dry ice machines and Mad Max-era future garb, director Keita Amemiya takes Jon Woo-style camera tricks to hyper-active new extremes, painting each scene with all manner of slow motion and camera techniques. Not since *Zieram* (which Amemiya also directed) and *Machine Head* have I been so entertained by Asian sci-fi.

As *Hakaider* gets underway, within the first five minutes it borrows from *Aliens* and *Robocop*, then goes on to sponge off of *Predator* and *Star Wars*. There's also enough *Terminator* references in here for Cameron to call the lawyers. For this version, Amemiya has gone back and added almost a full half hour of

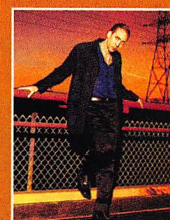
extra footage, further expanding the story and the film's special effects, and it shows.

Hakaider takes place in the far future (provided the future looks like a combination Downtown L.A. and Dallas) in a place called Jesus Town, which is ruled, big-brother style, by Gurjev, who loves the color white and looks like an '80s new wave reject, decked out in phony angel wings and some interesting rubber prosthetics. As the movie opens, a group of rebels looking for treasure in the bowels of an old prison stumble upon our hero—half human, half android—imprisoned, buried under a mass of chains. Not knowing exactly who or what it is, they, of course, open fire and empty a sea of bullets into his chest and body. *Hakaider*, obviously pissed, breaks free (hey, why didn't he do that years ago?) and luckily his trusty Harley (hilariously, also wrapped in chains as if it would attempt escape) is close by. So with his Terminator-issue sawed-off in place (the exact same place) he takes off to restore order in Jesus Town. Later we discover that Gurjev originally created *Hakaider* to protect Jesus Town, but he went berserk and before they could disassemble, some scientists stole him. With his new robot, Mikhail—a cross between Ultraman and Robocop—Gurjev keeps order in his Utopian society by performing top down lobotomies on anyone who crosses him, and then adopting the brain-donors as his "children." There's a whole side drama with *Hakaider* and one of the rebel girls as well that's just priceless. Nothing, however, can equal the Chevy Van decked out like an RV from hell or the fight scene between *Hakaider* and Michael. If you thought *Escape from L.A.* set a new standard for cheese, you ain't seen nothing yet. *Mechanical Violator Hakaider* is a must-own Tokyo Shock Video. **GR**

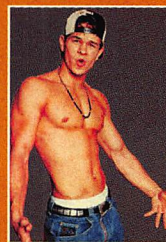
THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE APES DESCENDED FROM HUMANS.... Tim Burton's planned adaptation of *The Planet of the Apes* is now underway, having secured Mark Wahlberg in the lead role a la Charleton Heston. No word on which lucky actors and actresses get to don the monkey makeup. • SPEAKING OF MONKEYS:

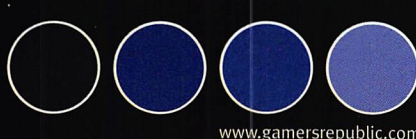
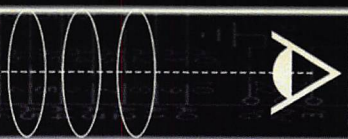
First we got word that Mike Myers' Sprockets-routine-turned-movie-project Dieter, in which the German talk-show host would be on a quest to find his kidnapped money, had added fellow SNL-ite Will Ferrell and Jack Black to the cast (along with David Hasselhoff, as you'll recall from last month). Then, we got word that Myers has exited the production, stating, "I cannot in good conscience accept \$20 million (for) a movie with an unacceptable script." Uh huh. Universal Pictures thinks he should, though, and is reportedly suing him for breach of contract. Hey, guys, we'll do it! "Would you like to touch my monkey?" • BETTER, STRONGER, BLACKER: The Farrelly Brothers are working on *The Six Billion Dollar Man*, and are reportedly trying to get Chris Rock for the lead role. Plans call for a cameo by the original bionic man, Lee Majors. • LOOK, AH'M BAHK: Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed on to the third Terminator movie, due to hit the screens in 2002.



The jury's still out on whether James Cameron will direct. • HE'S NO SUPERMAN: Nicolas Cage, the long-proportioned next Superman, has just announced he's stepping down from the role, mostly because Warner Bros. have let the project sit for so long. Maybe Chris Rock is available. • DOES HE SEE DEAD PEOPLE? The next Indiana Jones movie may be scripted by M. Night Shyamalan, the guy responsible for *The Sixth Sense*. Being that Indy is an archeologist and all, there should be plenty of dead people hanging around.

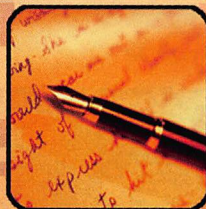


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FALLOUT



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Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).

Dear GR,

Thanks for the Konoko cover on issue 25. I find it most interesting that Rockstar president Sam Houser and Namco Tekken producer Masahiro Kimoto mention the Dreamcast (Houser as a good machine and Masahiro Kimoto as a possible future Tekken platform), but no Oni for Dreamcast, and no TTT arcade port? It's not that I want to, but I'm thinking less of these franchises by the minute. The wait for PS2, the price, and the well-documented flaws (or those known so far) are not good portents. It will probably be a good long while before even some hardcore gamers can plunk down that kind of cash, especially after throwing in with Sega. We're still paying for a few PS games too. The worst of it is that these third parties know that there's a big Dreamcast market here. And they're paying a little lip service to us all, but when it comes right down to it, their skids are being greased—and I don't mean by Microsoft.

Sincerely, MC

MC,

Hammer? That you? Honestly MC, at this point I think Oni would be a lot better off on Dreamcast. I can almost guarantee you it would be a far better game, as the Dreamcast is a snap to develop for. The new goal for PS2 developers is to get their PS2 games running as good as Dreamcast games. Problem is, few have been able to so far. Until developers master the complexities of the PS2, we're in for some rough weather. Once they do, however, the thing can really kick ass. A PS2 game firing on all four cylinders will be a blessed event. Meanwhile, it's a moot point, because the PS2 already has enough pre-books to eclipse the Dreamcast in its first week. At twice the price and with a sparse library of experimental games, this is certainly mind boggling, but it's a fact. It's simply more lucrative for companies to develop across all platforms with an emphasis on Sony. They go where the market leads, and for some strange reason, in the wake of the

strongest two-year library ever assembled (I'm talking about available games for Dreamcast by the fourth quarter), they're leading publishers straight into Sony's camp. DC users just aren't out there buying all of these amazing new games. It's the strangest turn of events we've ever seen, and I'm not quite sure how to explain it, but it's happening. We'll have this conversation again after the PS2 launches and Grandia 2, Jet Grind, Messiah, Shenmue, Eternal Arcadia, Fur Fighters and Phantasy Star have hit for DC. If by then people don't realize how incredible the Dreamcast universe really is, well, then maybe they never will. As for TTT on DC; how about Klonoa instead. Now that would rock.

Dear GR,

Let me get straight to the point of this letter: Konami has driven a stake through my heart. The creator of one of the greatest game series of all time has abandoned me. The Castlevania series belongs in the ranks of the Zeldas, Marios, and Final Fantasys, but with news of Resurrection being cancelled, I feel the series has effectively been destroyed. Dracula couldn't kill the Belmont clan, so Konami helped the count. I know another Castlevania game may surface in the future, but I seriously doubt it. What do you guys think? Do I have a legitimate concern or am I overreacting to the cancellation of one game?

Sincerely,
Steve M.

Steve,

Castlevania Resurrection would have made an already banner year for the Dreamcast even more celebratory. As sure as the seasons change an impending Castlevania game has always been waiting in the wings as far back as I can remember. Things just don't feel right when we don't have one to look forward to. Personally, I refuse to believe that the game is actually cancelled. I think there's more to the story, like perhaps the team working on it disbanded or something,

rather than a flat out cancellation. I think the game is going to resurface. If it doesn't, it will be the third biggest mistake (after the flogging of Contra and turning Castlevania 3D) that Konami has ever made. Any gamer worth his or her salt yearns to recapture the feeling that Symphony of the Night implanted in our souls; Konami has to know that. Lord knows we remind them every chance we get.

Dear GR,

"I recently learned something quite interesting about video games. Many young people have developed incredible hand, eye, and brain coordination in playing these games. The Air Force believes these kids will be outstanding pilots should they fly our jets" —Ronald Reagan in a statement, August 8, 1983

Why the hell has there never been a game based on the greatest anime series of all time? The original Bubblegum Crisis. Priss Asagiri could kick Lara Croft's ass and one combat boomer could waste 1000 Terminators.

Dave Halpern

Dave,

Should we even ask why these two revelations appear together? Ron was a cool dude, wasn't he? It's too bad he's dealing with such a debilitating disease. Of course he failed to recognize that we could also use our amazing skills and cunning to overthrow the government. As for BG Crisis, I agree, as I'm sure any anime fan would that it would make a hot game. Battle Angel, Variable Geo, Spriggan, Lupin, Saber Marionette, Vampire Hunter D, and Evangelion (to name but a few) all found good homes. Hell, even Devilman has a game. It's crap, but at least it has one. Speaking of crap, ever play the Cowboy Bebop game on PS? Ouch! Maybe BG Crisis is better off left alone. Perhaps with the advent of the new series along with the upcoming glut of killer new hardware, one will emerge. In the meantime, thanks for the memories. Goodnight Ronnie.

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► JET GRIND RADIO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

In between, completing challenges earns you new friends with new abilities until you have ten in your posse, and every once in a while you'll have to defend your turf against a rival gang.



It's a shred-tastic escapade the likes of which you have never imagined, covering 18 vast areas and filled with some of the best music this side of the equator. Did I mention that the game is so gorgeous you may soil your trousers? Now for some quotes for the back of the box: "If you liked Crazy Taxi you'll love Jet Grind Radio." "If you play one Dreamcast game this year make it three—Fur Fighters, Grandia 2, and Jet Grind Radio." "If you don't buy a copy of Jet Grind Radio, I hate you." "You'll never play Jet Grind Radio on the PS2, but you can play PS on your DC, which is better than PS on the PS, which is better than PS2 so far anyway." **GR**

► FINAL FANTASY IX, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

differing classes who possess individual skills that are augmented by a wealth of items and weapons. Extended use of your character-specific equipment can grant you permanent knowledge of a particular spell or attack as ability points increase.

The past two chapters in the Final Fantasy saga have been ambitious, extremely accomplished examples of game making that have thrilled throngs of devoted fans. But there are those,

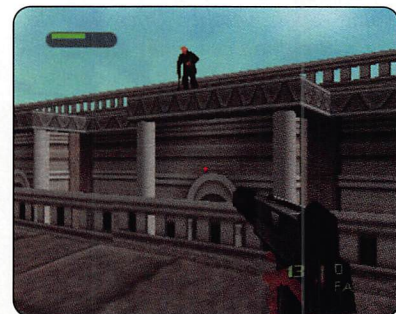


like me, who have watched the series veer down an unwanted path. With Final Fantasy IX, Square is back on course. This will certainly be one for all to cherish. **GR**

► THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

surprisingly, the N64 uses a great deal of voice-overs to keep the game moving. They must have engineered a new compression technique, because the clear dialog sounds better than any other game they have produced for the N64. (Triple Play, anyone?)

Bond seems to have found a fitting home over at EA and will



probably continue to take the lion's share of marketing to insure the brand name. This will, of course, result in consistently better 007 games for all of us. Now how about that PS2 version? **GR**

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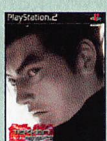
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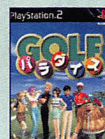
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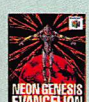
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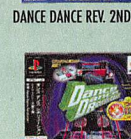
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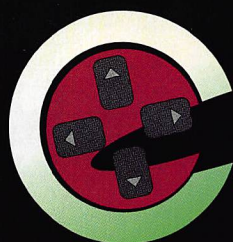
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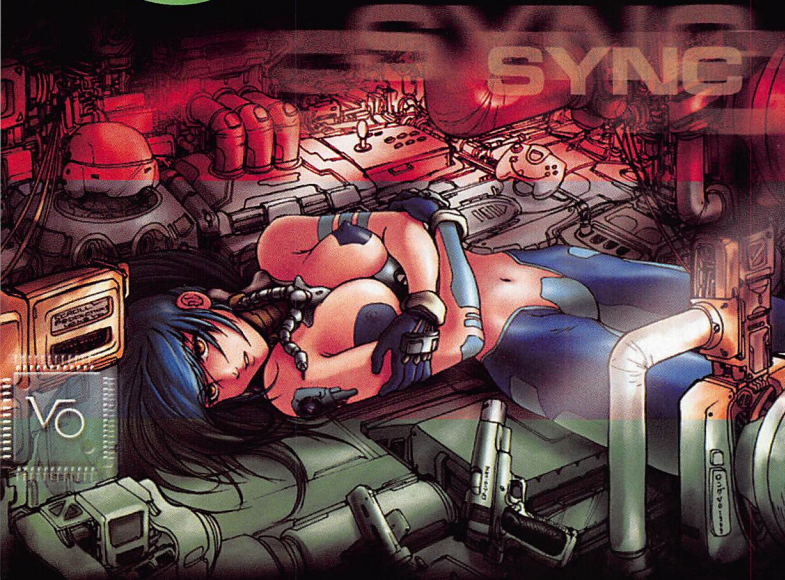
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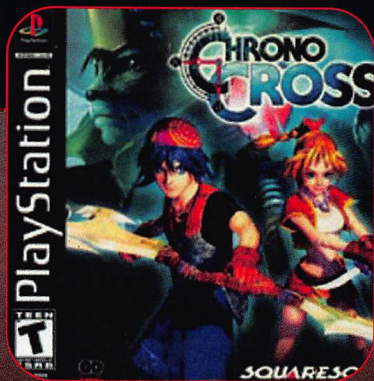
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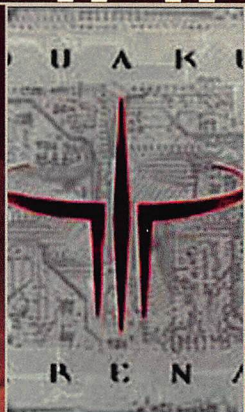
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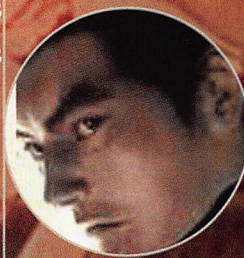
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Now that the PS2 has cooled down after the Japanese launch and awaits appreciable software for the October 26 rollout here in the States, the Dreamcast, Nintendo 64 and, yes, PlayStation are now not quite as defunct as some like to believe. Stoking our Dreamcast fires for next month are Cannon Spike, the manic arcade action game starring a handful of Street Fighter characters, Grandia II, World Series Baseball 2K1, and Quake III, among others (Soul Reaver 2 approaches...). PlayStation continues pumping with Final Fantasy IX, and the N64 shows that any game with Nintendo characters is sure to wildly entertain—i.e. Mario Tennis. Oh, and as for PS2, we're finally gonna start seeing some of those much-talked-about, rarely seen American games.

ISSUE

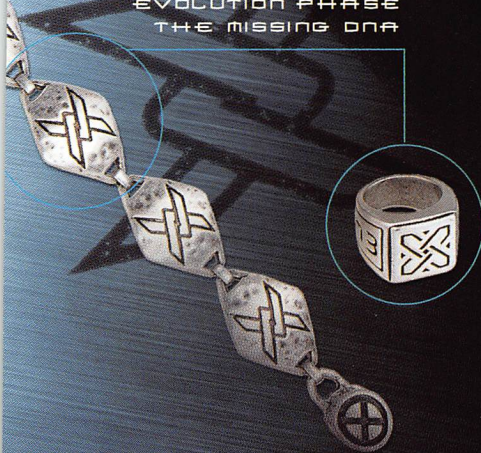
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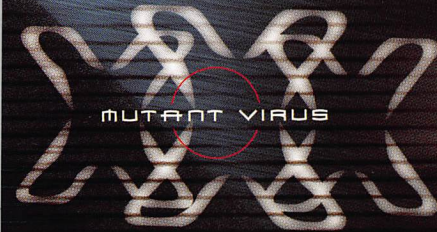
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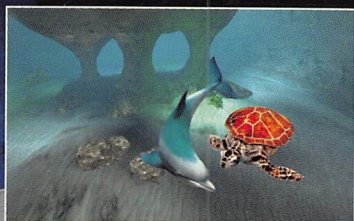
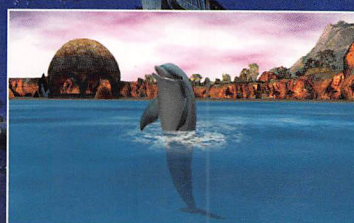
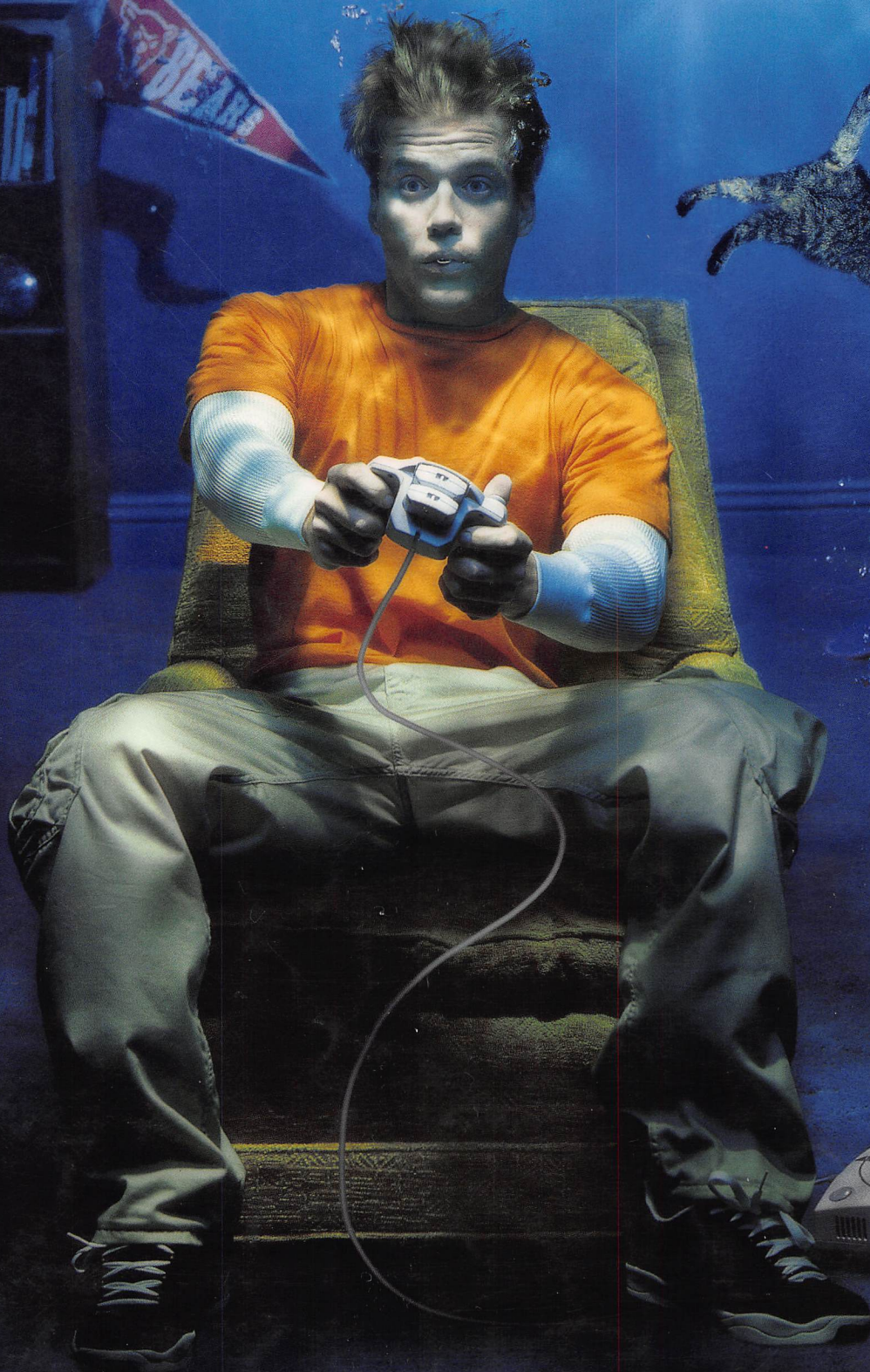
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Stay away from jellyfish. Remember to come up for air. Don't eat bad fish. Or you could die. Of course, a shark could kill you too. On top of all that, the ocean's in a downward spiral and it's up to you to save it. Tough job, but you'll figure it out. You're the chosen one. The big fish (although you're not a fish). Too bad you can't even count on Greenpeace. The weight of the ocean rests on your dorsal fin.



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